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SOCCER

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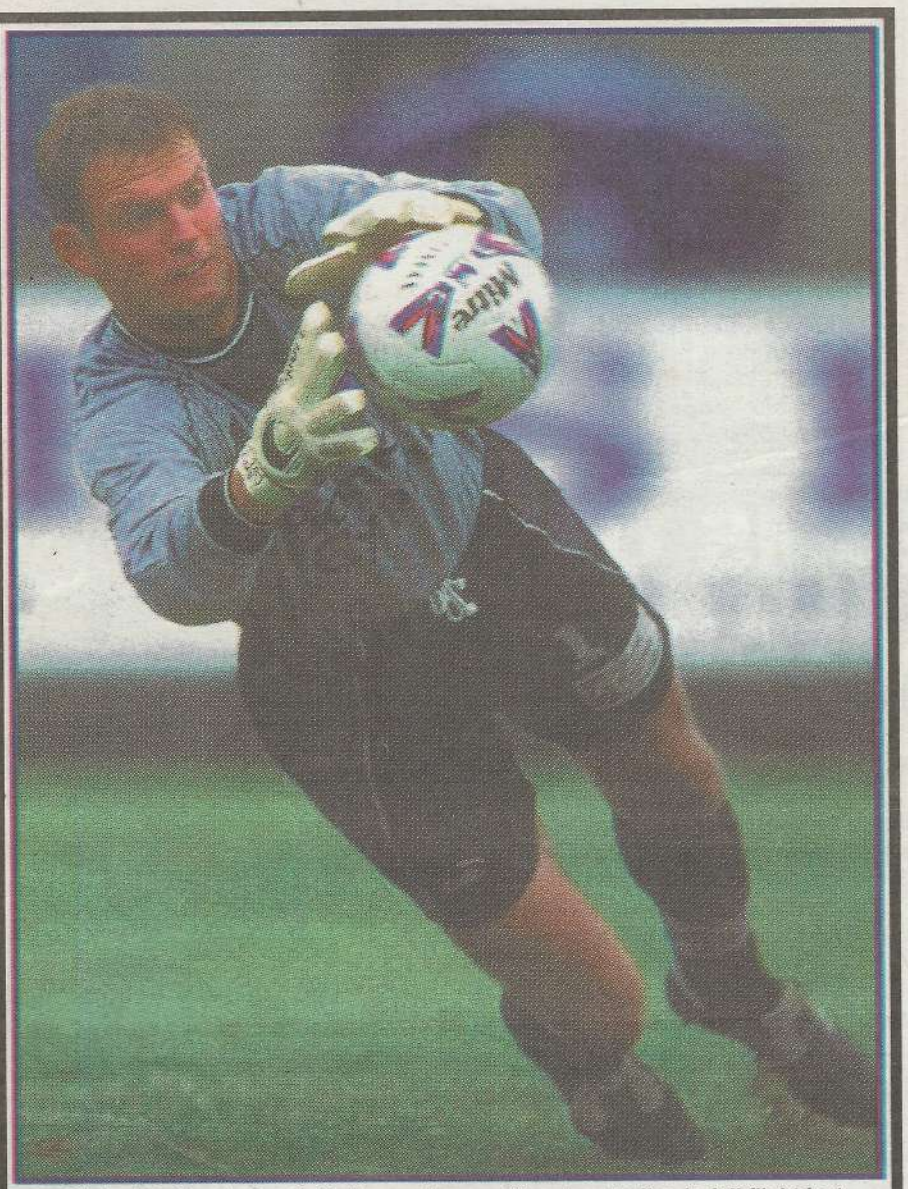


Michael Petkovic: South Melbourne's magnificent custodian in full flight last Sunday night against Perth Glory at the Bob Jane Stadium in Melbourne.

New Signings Double Spirit

By John Economos

The Northern Spirit that's been sailing across rough seas in recent weeks, (five straight losses), recently recruited two new hands on deck in assistant coach Mickey Hickman plus granite-hard defender, Mike Smith.

However Hickman may now, most unexpectedly, find himself as the Spirit's new Head coach, not just the assistant coach, later today, (Tuesday), or tomorrow.

It's understood that Soccer Australia has recently had dialogue with the Northern Spirit officials which could see that Club's head coach, Graham Arnold, move into a fulltime position as assistant to national coach, Frank Farina.

At the moment Arnold is Farina's assistant, but employed by Soccer Australia on a part-time basis only.

The phlegmatic Hickman who returned to Sydney from a coaching position in Japan five weeks ago, had planned to make a quick dash to England this week to have a quick look around there of the coaching scene.

Meanwhile Smith, Marconi's durable defender-cum-midfielder, was making a steady recovery from his groin surgery he had done during the last off season, when the Northern Spirit zipped in two weeks ago and made a bid for him.

The Spirit's Player/coach Graham Arnold, following last Sunday's 2-1 loss to Sydney Olympic at the Belmore Sports Ground, finally confirmed that he had now retired as a player for the Spirit.

The 37 year old former Australian international striker had also been filling in as the Spirit's sweeper for almost the past two seasons.

When ABSW contacted Hickman last night, he stated: "Arnie was having problems at the Spirit and gave me a buzz to invite me in to give him a hand.

"The next day we met, where he gave me the full situation at the Club and asked if I was available to help him out a bit through the sticky period the team was going through.

"Arnie was also looking for a replacement sweeper to fill his boots on the pitch so that he could retire and concentrate solely on his coaching duties.

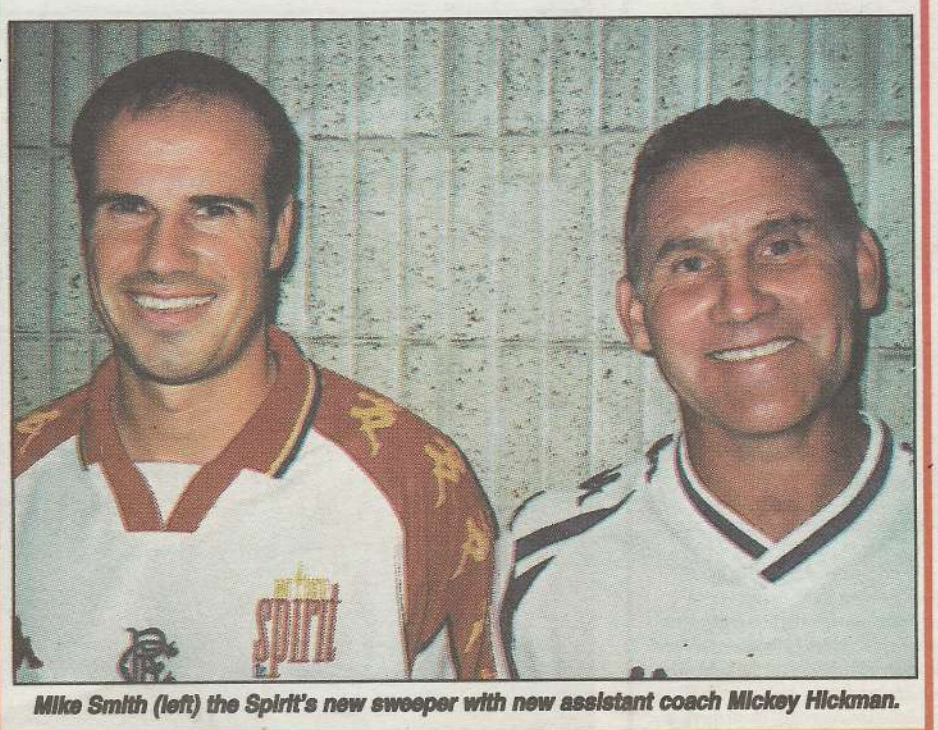
"That's when Arnie moved in and signed Mike Smith from Marconi almost two weeks ago," Hickman explained.

"Smithy is getting fitter and fitter with every game and at 31 years of age still has plenty of good football left in him.

"He's got ample experience, is mobile and gets around the pitch well, plus adds some steel to the defence.

"Smithy is a good strong player possessing a strong character ," ended Hickman.

Hickman was former Australian coach Eddie Thomson's assistant at J-League side Sanfrecce of Hiroshima.



Mike Smith (left) the Spirit's new sweeper with new assistant coach Mickey Hickman.

AUSTRALIA TO MEET MEXICO IN USA

By John Economos

Australia has eagerly accepted an invitation to play Mexico's national team later this month in San Jose, California, in a serious warm-up match to the Oceania World Cup qualifiers that kick off in April.

Australia's national coach Frank Farina stated yesterday: "Mexico, rated 12 th in the World by FIFA's rankings, is a quality side, and while this will be another difficult proposition for us, against a tough opponent on foreign soil, this lead up is all about playing opposition where we will benefit from the match.

"Irrespective of the result, this will be a great game for us, we'll be gaining experience and match practice against a team with a similar style to what we'll be playing towards the end of our campaign, (World Cup), presuming we're going all the way."

Australia's match against Mexico has been scheduled for February 21st.

Farina forewarned that the Australian squad he'll select to travel to the USA would be very similar, (with few exceptions), to the one he chose to play Scotland in Glasgow last November.

It's expected that due to some old and recent injuries, Farina will be forced to overlook the likes of Tony Vidmar, Harry Kewell and Craig Moore.

The sturdy Vidmar was injured last week-end playing for Rangers who beat Dunfermline Athletic 2-0 at Ibrox.

Soccer Australia also confirmed it has scheduled a full international clash with current World Cup and European champions, France, to be played in November, either in Melbourne or Sydney.

This international attraction unquestionably will guarantee Soccer Australia a huge sell-out at the Box Office should the French manager, Roger Lemerre lob into Australia with his full galaxy of World Cup stars.

Farina seems almost certain that his counter-part will do exactly just that, as he went on to conclude: "To see the World Champions here in Australia, will be something extra special—the French don't send their second teams."

WORLD CUP CHAMPIONS HEADING FOR AUSTRALIA ... PAGE 3

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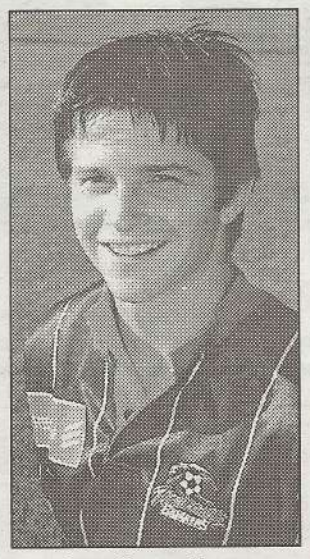
20-man Young Socceroos called to camp



Greg Owen: Young Socceroo.

Wayne Srhoj: Young Socceroo.

National Youth Coach Ange Postecoglou has named a squad of 20 players, for the upcoming Oceania Football Confederation qualifiers to be held in the Cook Islands later this month.

The LG Young Socceroos will go into camp in Coffs Harbour from next Monday, before flying out to Raratonga to begin their campaign for the World Youth Cup, which will be held in Argentina in June.

The Australian Under-20s will also play two matches during next week's pre-Qualifiers camp, both against a Coffs Harbour Representative Team, the first Wednesday 7th February and the second Saturday 10th February, both at the International Sports Centre.

The LG Young Socceroo Squad, to represent Australia at the OFC World Youth Cup Qualifiers is (see below):

Australia is grouped with Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa and Tonga, and subject to winning its group at the OFC Qualifiers, will play the winner of Group A in a two-leg home and away play-off, the second leg to be played March 4 in Coffs Harbour.

THE SQUAD

TURNBULL Michael	Goalkeeper	Marconi Stallions	Australia
VANSTRATTAN Jess	Goalkeeper	Juventus/Verona	Italy
BYRNES Mark	Defender	Parramatta Power	Australia
GOULDING Aaron	Defender	Adelaide City	Australia
KISNORBO Patrick	Defender	South Melbourne	Australia
MADASCHI Adrian	Defender	Atalanta	Italy
MILICEVIC Ljubo	Defender	Perth Glory	Australia
ELRICH Ahmad	Midfielder	Parramatta Power	Australia
FERRANTE Michael	Midfielder	West Ham	England
LAST Grant	Midfielder	Marconi Stallions	Australia
NORTH Jade	Midfielder	Brisbane Strikers	Australia
OWENS Greg	Midfielder	Sydney Olympic	Australia
PANTELIS Lucas	Midfielder	Adelaide City	Australia
SRHOJ Wayne	Midfielder	Brisbane Strikers	Australia
VASILEVSKI Daniel	Midfielder	Melbourne Knights	Australia
WILKSHIRE Luke	Midfielder	Middlesbrough	England
CARLE Nick	Striker	Sydney Olympic	Australia
GULESSERIAN Kevo	Striker	Marconi Stallions	Australia
KENNEDY Joshua	Striker	Wolfsburg	Germany
McDONALD Scott	Striker	Southampton	England

JAPANESE TEAMS ON AUSTRALIAN TOUR

The South Australian Soccer Federation will again play host to two professional Japanese J-League Teams as they come to Adelaide for training camps in preparation of the 2001 J-League season.

Thee camps are an initiative of the South Australian Soccer Federation, who each year issues invitations to host these teams.

The Economic Benefit to the state is conservatively placed at $500,000 per annum.

Consadole Sapporo (2000 champions of the J2 and now promoted to J1) arrive in Adelaide on 31st January.

They will spend the first 10 days of their camp in the McLaren Vale, utilising the facilities of the Perfect Fit gymnasium, the beaches of Port rigorous activities such as a ropes course, mount the adventure tower, take on challenge hill and take on some after dark orienteering.

While in Adelaide the team will be based at the HYATT HOTEL. Training sessions are organised twice daily and will play a further three matches including a match on Saturday February 17th against Verdy Kawasaki.

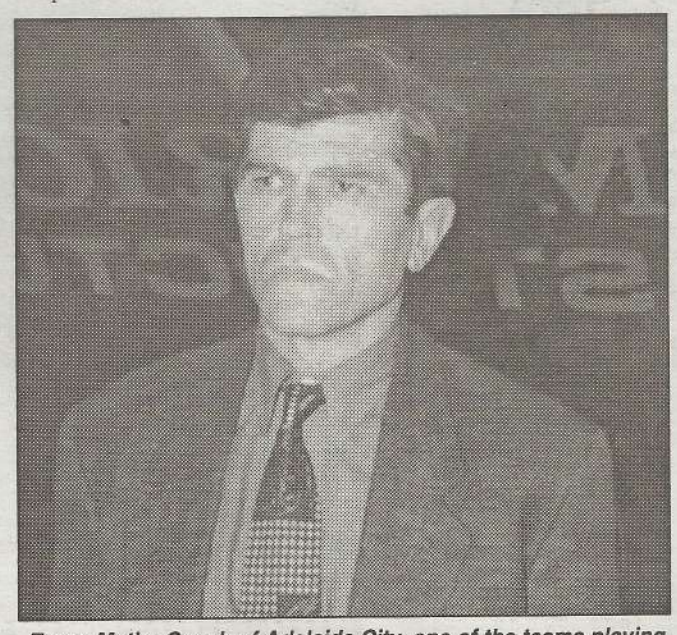
PLAYING SCHEDULE

DATE	MATCH	VENUE	KO
Thursday February 8th	Sapporo vs Adelaide Blue Eagles	Southern Sports Complex	7:00
Sunday February 11th	Verdy vs State Team	Hindmarsh Stadium	7:00
Tuesday February 13th	Sapporo vs State Team	Hindmarsh Stadium	6:00
Tuesday February 3th	Adelaide City vs Verdy	Hindmarsh Stadium	8:00
Saturday February 17th	Sapporo vs Verdy	Hindmarsh Stadium	7:00
Tuesday February 20th	Adelaide City vs Sapporo	Hindmarsh Stadium	7:00

Camps have been conducted each year for the past six years, with six J-League Teams and ALL of Japans National teams holding a training camp in that time.

Noarlunga and the Southern Sports Complex as their training base.

As well, on Saturday February 3rd the team will spend the day at Woodside where they will undergo



Zoran Matic: Coach of Adelaide City, one of the teams playing host to the visiting Japanese sides.

This is this teams second visit to Adelaide. Verdy are also scheduled to hold two sessions daily and will play three matches while in Adelaide against the State Team, Adelaide City force and Verdy Kawasaki.

Federation Chairman Les Avory said that "these camps are a great promotion for soccer in our state, they provide the opportunity for our Premier and State league players to pit their skills against the professional players from Japan — some of whom are part of the Japanese National Teams."

But by far the biggest attraction for these teams is the opportunity to train and play on our International Hindmarsh Stadium.

The Economic impact that these camps have speaks for itself — providing a great benefit for the South Australian community in general."

Details as to training sessions, venues and times will be advised as soon as the teams confirm with the Federation.

Patrick Kisnorbo: Young Socceroo.

MAROUBRA HOSTS BEACH SOCCER TOURNEY

All roads will lead to Maroubra, NSW, on the weekend of 17-18 February, 2001, where the first major beach soccer competition of the year will hold on the Maroubra beach.

Details of the eagerly-awaited competition revealed that, as is the case with all previous Competitions, there will be two divisions of men and womenís teams.

The tournament will hold over two days, with teams split into Open Mens and Open Womens. The first day (Saturday) is a round robin format with all teams guaranteed three matches each.

The second day (Sunday) is the knockout finals, with only qualifying teams required to play, to determine the winners in both divisions Beach Soccer tournaments are normally open to the general public as an amateur round robin and finals competition. There are six divisions to cater for boys, girls, men and women, so the whole family can play. There are 32 teams in each division, and all teams consist of 5 players on the field at any one time.

Teams play barefoot on a field roughly the size of a basketball court, located centrally on the beach. The ball is a modified soccer ball which is lighter and softer than the normal ball. All teams play a minimum number of three heat matches. The top two teams in each group make it to the "sudden deathî(that's only a 50% knockout). This proceeds until a singlechampion team emerges.

Tournaments will be held over one weekend and finalists play for the Beach Soccer World Cup and cash prizes — up to $I,000 in prizemoney per division.

The game of beach soccer has been played throughout the world, in places such as Brazil, Canada, America, the UK, Italy and Portugal, as both a social and competitive game — attracting both amateur and big name professional players.

Beach soccer is played bare foot on the sand. The ball is lighter and softer than a normal soccer ball.

Rules are modified only slightly to suit the playing area. Teams play a round robin style competition for great cash prizes.

Third Candidate for SA Leadership

THIRD MAN IN CHALLENGE

Speculation as to the identity of a possible third candidate to stand for the position of Soccer Australia chairman heightened as former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett was expected to announce his choice this week.

Believed to be on Kennett's list are former Sydney Olympics minister, Michael Knight, and former AFL chief, Ross Oakley.

So far, declared candidates are NSL chairman Tony Labbozetta and Victorian commissioner Joe Brondolino.

PRIDE ABOUT TO BE SOLD

Melbourne furniture millionaire Tony Schiavello is set to hand Eastern Pride a cheque to become owner of the Morwell club.

Schiavello plans to relocate the NSL club to Melbourne. Initially he was interested in saving NSL club Carlton, but he later withdrew his offer and Carlton folded as a result last December.

Schiavello is reportedly prepared to be paying $1.5 million, which is half the asking price of $3 million.

Schiavello visited Morwell and held talks with club officials.

He was a guest of South Melbourne against Perth last Sunday and confirmed his intentions.

"There's every chance the deal will go through," Schiavello said.

SOCCEROOS GAMES IN MELBOURNE

The MCG and not Homebush Bay's Olympic Stadium is to be the likely venue for the Socceroos friendly international against France. The match is scheduled for November 11, Remembrance Day.

According to insiders, the MCG is also believed to be the preferred venue for a Socceroos qualifying match against a fifth-best South American nation for the 2002 World Cup in November.

All indications are the organiser and Soccer Australia's marketing company, IEC, is said to favor the MCG as the ideal venue for both matches.

The MCG was the venue for Australia's 2-2 draw against Iran and failed qualification for the 1998 World Cup and hosted Olympic football matches last year.

EAGLES HIT ROCK BOTTOM

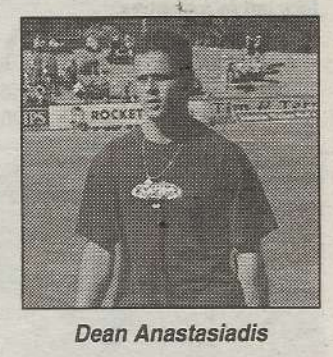
Meadow Park Eagles holds the dubious distinction of having hit absolute rockbottom.

The Melbourne club, in the northern suburb of Gladstone Park, finished last in the third division of the Provisional League. "You can't go any lower," coach Tommy Daly said.

The club has some pedigree to live up to. NSL brothers John and Dean Anastasiadis tested their junior skills at the Eagles, Daly recalled.

Daly himself is no slouch either. "I was brought over from Liverpool in 1988 by Western Suburbs," the former striker said.

He also played for Green Gully and at Morwell Falcons (now Eastern Pride).The Eagles are itching to fly and reach new heights. It has begun a recruiting program.



Dean Anastasiadis

Anyone interested in joining them can call the club on (03) 9338 0101 or Daly on mobile number 0402 479 564.

World Champions Await Socceroos

By Emma Nwaneri

French Soccer superstars Zinedine Zidane and Fabien Barthez have declared their avowed desire to visit Australia later in the year as members of the French national squad billed to meet the Socceroos in a proposed friendly game.

Speaking over the weekend from his base in Turin, Italy where he plays for Serie A giants, Juventus, Zidane stated that , ë" I really look forward to going down under, as they call it, to play against the Australian side, which also boasts of hugely talented players.The Australians put up a great show with the outstanding success they made of the Sydney Olympic games and everyone else around the world watched the spectacle with a bit of envy. I , like any other sportsman or woman around the world, would surely have loved to be in Sydneÿ last year fro the Olympics , though unfortunately, it was not possibleî.

"Going there now for the game against the Socceroos will be a huge thrill which I'm really waiting for eagerly".

Speaking in a similar vein, number one goalkeeper for the world champions, Fabian Barthez also spoke at length about the impending match-up between France and Australia.

The Manchester United of England safehands told reporters at the end his club's premiership game against Everton over the weekend, that he was confident of manning the posts in the eagerly-anticipated game with Australia.

Zinedine Zidane: Looking forward to meeting the Socceroo.

Barthez, who was responding to questions about his performance in last weekís FA Cup defeat to West Ham, where he committed a huge blunder by standing by to let Paolo Di Canio score the winning goal for West Ham, added he was confident he was still top choice for the French national soccer squad.

In his words, " I expect to be part of the managerís proposed team in all future immediate games leading up to the defence of both our world cup and European Cup titles.Most importantly, I am looking forward to be part of the team to Australia later in the year. It is the first time I'll be going to that part of the world to play and I guess we have thousands of fans out there who will be hugely thrilled to come out and watch us."

Barthez however rejected suggestions that the game would be a walkover for the world champions, pointing out that the Socceroos boast of talented and experienced players who will surely put up a big fight.

"Despite thet fact that Australia have been trying to go to the world cup for sometime now, I still have great respect for many of the players that have come out from there over the years. Players like Harry Kewell, Mark Schwarzer, Viduka are all established stars and we see what they do every weekend here in the premiership.

The Australians are clearly no push-overs and remember, as world champions everyone wants to beat France. It surely will be a huge thrill to the Aussies if they manage to beat us, but we'll have to wait till then to see about that ".

Sydney or Melbourne are billed to host the explosive encounter scheduled for a yet-to-be-determined date in November.

As world and European champions, France are excluded from qualifying matches and have therefore lined up series of friendly games with several top soceer-playing nations around the world, to maintain their level of preparedness.

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David Barber (right): Key member of the Australian Soccer team to the 2000 Paralympics.

OZ PARALYMPIC SOCCER SQUAD START SCREENING

Disabled Soccer players and coaches that will make up the Australian paralympic Soccer squad, are now being sought by the Australian Paralympic Committee (APC).

Accordingly, the APC is searching for experienced coaches and willing athletes in preparation for the Soccer event of the 2002 world championship, as well as the 2004 Olympic Games.

The APC, in a release, stated that the invitation is open to athletes with cerebral palsy, who will be expected to form a seven-a-side Soccer team. The selected players will be handled by a team of coaches, to be made up of a head coach, an assistant coach, a manager and a physiotherapist.

While explaining that the head coach position will be suited for a coach with Youth league experience, the APC added that expenses, travelling and other costs will be extended to all the positions, including an honorarium for all coaching staff.

Similarly, athletes with cerebral palsy, are invited to come forward and undergo trials for eventual selection into the Soccer team. All applications are expected to come in by Friday, February 23, 2001.

The APC recalled that Australia competed in the Soccer event of the 2000 paralympic games in Sydney, where it finished seventh in a strong field of top teams including Russia, Argentina, Brazil, Netherlands and Spain.

AUSTRALIAN PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE

Youth League Coaches Wanted

Soccer at the Paralympic Games
for athletes with cerebral palsy

The Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) is seeking interest from COACHING STAFF AND ATHLETES to be involved in the Australian Paralympic Soccer Squad in preparation for the 2002 World Championships and the 2004 Paralympic Games.

Paralympic Soccer is a seven-a-side game for athletes with cerebral palsy that is played in accordance with FIFA rules. The standard of the Australian squad is relative to Under 17-18 local club level.

Staff positions available include HEAD COACH, ASSISTANT COACH, MANAGER and PHYSIOTHERAPIST. The Head Coach position would be suited to a coach with youth league experience at a representative level. Position descriptions are available. **Applications close Friday 23rd February, 2001.**

The Australian Paralympic Committee is also seeking ATHLETES (with cerebral palsy) to trial for the Australian squad.

For more information, please contact ROSS BOYD on
02 9245 2514

The Good Oil ... The Good Oil ...

By John Economos

ALEX CASTRO, Canberra's talented striker or wide midfielder, left Australia last week for South America.

Alex wants to try his luck out in Argentina.

He's lined up trials with various clubs over the next 10 days and hopes he cracks a contract.

Alex Castro: Canberra's talented striker-cum-midfielder off to Argentina.

●●●●

CHRIS JONES, South Melbourne's reliable goalkeeper, has made his long awaited comeback to the training pitch after having had surgery on his knee.

Jones who has signed a new three year contract with the Victorian giants, performed most brilliantly for Souths last year at FIFA's First World Club Championships in Brazil.

Souths' rookie NSL coach Mickey Petersen had no hesitation in rushing Jones back into his 15 man squad for the game against the Perth Glory last Sunday evening.

●●●●

SERIE A side Reggina has agreed to tour Australia mid-June for a three match programme with games confirmed in Melbourne and Sydney.

Negotiations for a third and final match are currently being discussed with Perth and Adelaide.

The Sydney match against the touring Italian will be played at the Marconi Stadium whilst the Melbourne game has been scheduled for Olympic Park.

●●●●

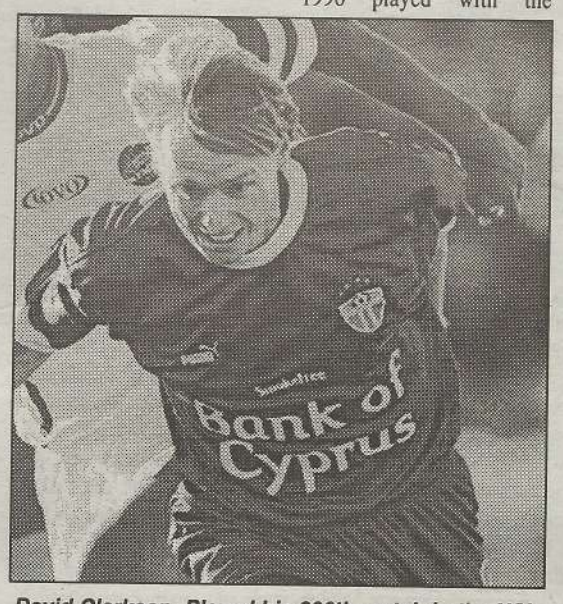
ANDREW MARTH, the Melbourne Knights' midfield enforcer, played his 200th match in the NSL for the Club last Friday night against the Parramatta Power in Sydney.

'Stabber' celebrated the night in style as his team defeated the Power 1-3. Marth became only the third Knights' player to have reached the 'double ton' mark after the retired but legendary right midfield-playmaker Josip Biskic, (282 games) plus granite-hard stopper George Hannah (224 games).

●●●●

The Parramatta Power's teenaged international central defender, Mark Byrnes, has signed with Austrian club side SV Salzburg on a loan deal to the end of this season.

The former captain of the Australian Under 17s World Championships side is expected to soon become a regular member in manager's Hans Backe's first team.



David Clarkson: Played his 200th match in the NSL last Sunday night.

Andrew ('Stabber') Marth: The Knights' double centurion.

●●●●

DAVID CLARKSON, South Melbourne's highly experienced blond right wingback, racked up his 'double-ton' of games in the NSL last Sunday night at the Bob Jane Stadium against the Perth Glory.

The unyielding Clarkson prior to joining Souths in 1996 played with the Brisbane Lions, Adelaide City, Sunshine George Cross as well as Heidelberg.

At the other end of the pitch on the same evening, the Glory's quality custodian, Jason Petkovic, also racked up his 200th game in the NSL, of which he played 151 games with his former Club, Adelaide City.

In the whole five years whilst at Adelaide City, Jason unbelievably failed to miss one single match in the NSL from 1994.

●●●●

THE two players that have racked up the fastest 200 matches in the NSL were Adelaide City's former international sweeper Milan Ivanovic and Souths' current captain and linkman, Paul Trimboli.

Big Milan took just six years and 316 days to knock over his double century whilst 'Trimmers' reached that milestone in six years and 321 days.

●●●●

NEVER let it be ever said, that Newcastle United's boss Lee Sterrey doesn't have a sense of humour.

A couple of weeks back, after the Melbourne Knights 1-5 defeat of Newcastle at the Marathon Stadium, the lads from the ASDA, (Australian Sports Drug Agency), moved in and called out four Newcastle players to be 'tested'.

Normally, ASDA tests just two players from each team.

This time four Newcastle United players were 'sampled' to which Sterrey quipped to all his squad:

"See, even the ASDA blokes can't believe where we are on the table."

●●●●

EDDIE KRNCEVIC, Marconi's Head coach, was extremely elated by the performances displayed by some of Marconi's Youth team players that clashed last Thursday night with Yugoslavia's crack side, Red Star at the Marconi Stadium.

Red Star had streaked ahead to a 0-3 lead at the break when Krncevic released many substitutes from the Youth team into play for the second session.

"I was very impressed by the young ones that refused to be over-awed by their most illustrious opponents.

"Young central marker Michael Beauchamp who actually started the match for example, was ever-so reliable and cool against his experienced professional opponent and hardly made an error.

"Some of these kids have a very good future. All they need is a chance.

"We were never going to beat this side so I brought on some youngsters.

"They were just great," ended Krncevic.

Beauchamp last season won the trophy for being voted 'Marconi's Youth Team Player Of The Year'.

The second half saw Red Star's scoring restricted to just one more goal by the hungry Marconi youngsters and in fact Marconi scored a late goal through Kevo Culessarian.

Final score: Marconi 1 Red Star 3.

●●●●

NOW that the Seven Network has finally surrendered its long time exclusive telecasting rights of the AFL to the joint-venturers of the Nine and Ten Networks, who together bided the ludicrous and obscene sum of $500 million for such rights, Soccer, we are told, is about to get a decent run.

Oh, really?

'Good Oil' was recently informed by the Seven Network that the time has arrived when its Network will switch its focus onto Soccer. Really?

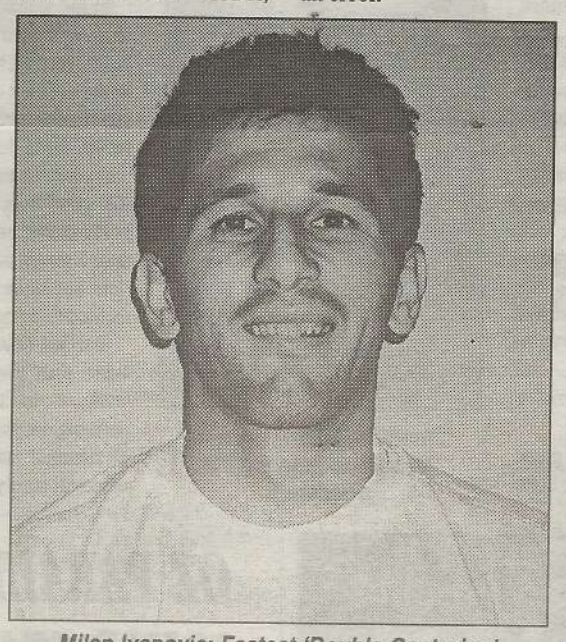
If you can believe them, (it's possible), the Seven Network plans to upgrade its coverage of Soccer next season, and will concentrate on how it can also promote the code in a better fashion.

Decent and respectable time-slots, not after midnight which must have been designed for insomniacs, would do just fine, Seven.

And should Seven need any production and presentational guidance, all it has to do is switch on SBS and just watch what those guys have been doing with the code since the 'baby channel' commenced transmission back in November of 1980.

Learning from a 'baby'?

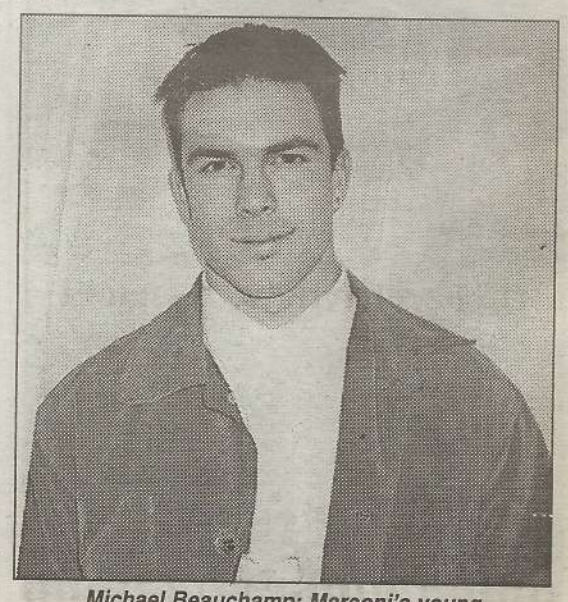
Lee Sterrey: Newcastle United's dry humoured coach.



Milan Ivanovic: Fastest 'Double-Centurion' in the NSL.

Chris Jones: South Melbourne's reliable goakeeper is back.

Mark Byrnes: Set to break into the Austrian first team.



Michael Beauchamp: Marconi's young strapping stopper.

The Good Oil ... The Good Oil

By John Economos

PAUL BILOKAPIC, the Northern Spirit's fiery midfielder or central marker, has returned to his old Club, Sydney United on loan.

The lanky player will prove a valuable acquisition for United's coach Alan Hunter. 'Bilko' has been loaned out by the Spirit to United for the remainder of the season.

Paul Bilokapic: Back at Sydney United.

Bilokapic came on in the second half last Sunday as a defensive midfielder for United against Adelaide City. Seems 'Bilko' brought some good luck with him to United as his team won 2-1.

●●●●

WOLLONGONG WOLVES late last week clinched a deal with Fresh Food Supermarket giants, Woolworths, in an exercise that should hopefully boost the gates at Wollongong's next four home games.

One Free Ticket to go and watch Wollongong play at home at WIN Stadium, can be obtained by anyone that purchases a Wollongong ticket of equal value, provided that he or she presents a 'Wolves Shopper's docket' coupon.

These coupons are now available, only from any of Woolworths' Supermarkets situated at Albion Park, Corrimal, Dapto, Fairy Meadow, Shellharbour, Warilla or Wollongong.

Woolworths' South Coast Area Manager, Mr Keith Vickery, stated that he was 'delighted to offer Woolworths customers, additional extra value and the wonderful opportunity to see the mighty Wollongong Wolves'.

The four home games applicable to the 'Wolves Shopper Docket' promotion, are against:

Melbourne Knights, Saturday February 17th.

Northern Spirit, Tuesday February 27th.

Parramatta Power, Friday March 2nd.

Newcastle United, Friday March 16th.

●●●●

JAMIE HARNWELL, the Perth Glory's reliable central marker, seems of late to want to also be known as a reliable goalscorer.

If that's the case, he's certainly heading in the right direction.

In the last two weeks, the Glory has had to play the current League Champions Wollongong Wolves and the current League leaders South Melbourne.

Last Sunday at the Bob Jane Stadium, in the battle between the two table toppers, South Melbourne and the Glory, it was Harnwell yet again that came to the Western Australians' rescue.

Souths' lethal left striker Con Boutsianis had put his side ahead in this titanic combat in the 56th minute.

But less than two minutes later, Harnwell had 'balanced the books' at the other end to ultimately earn his side, for the second week running, another most valuable League point.

The previous week at Perth Oval, the current League champions Wollongong Wolves looked like winning the match as they led 0-1.

But it was Harnwell that came to the rescue as he pushed up to explode what will almost definitely become, the 'goal of the year', as he belted a vicious first timed right footed rocket into the target from an incredible 41 metres .

These days when one plays the Glory, it seems that it's nowhere near enough to watch them at the front where Bobby Despotovski and Damian Mori are lurking.

One now has to also keep an eye down the back as well to see if Jamie is anywhere over the halfway line.

Jamie Harnwell: The Glory's defender scores yet again.

●●●●

IT'S Official. The Northern Spirit's Player/Coach, Graham Arnold, has retired as a player.

Two weeks ago against South Melbourne, at the end of the match at North Sydney Oval, Arnold jogged over to the fence and hurled his boots into the crowd.

At the time it seemed most symbolic that his retirement as a player was pending.

However that same evening, Arnie was adamant that he wasn't retiring.

But last Sunday night at the Belmore Sports Ground, after the match against Sydney Olympic which the Spirit lost 2-1, and even though Arnold did not play, he finally confirmed to 'Good Oil' that at the age of 37 his playing days were now well and truly over.

"I have finished two weeks ago as a player.

"I didn't enjoy it any longer—that is, coaching and playing.

"It just got too hard to keep going," Arnold painfully confessed.

"This was the first game, (against Olympic), that we played against 10 men, (Olympic's Marusic sent off), and lost.

"We also lost our most potent player, (giant teenaged import striker, Ben Burgess limping off with a badly damaged ankle).

"It was disappointing as two unprofessional moments, (by match officlals), cost us two goals and the game," Arnold summed up.

Arnold, having played as the Spirit's durable sweeper during the past two seasons, and despite his aching frame from age, plus being saddled with the added heavy load of coaching, was still, (and by far), the Spirit's very best, and most consistent player, from Day One till that last match against Souths.

From now on, Soccer fans will only see Arnie geared up in civies, and never again to wear a Soccer strip.

●●●●

THE WOLLONGONG WOLVES next Tuesday night, (February 13th), will be staging their 'Welcome Back Oceania Champions Dinner' at the Fraternity Bowling and Recreation Club, down at Fairy Meadow on the South Coast of NSW.

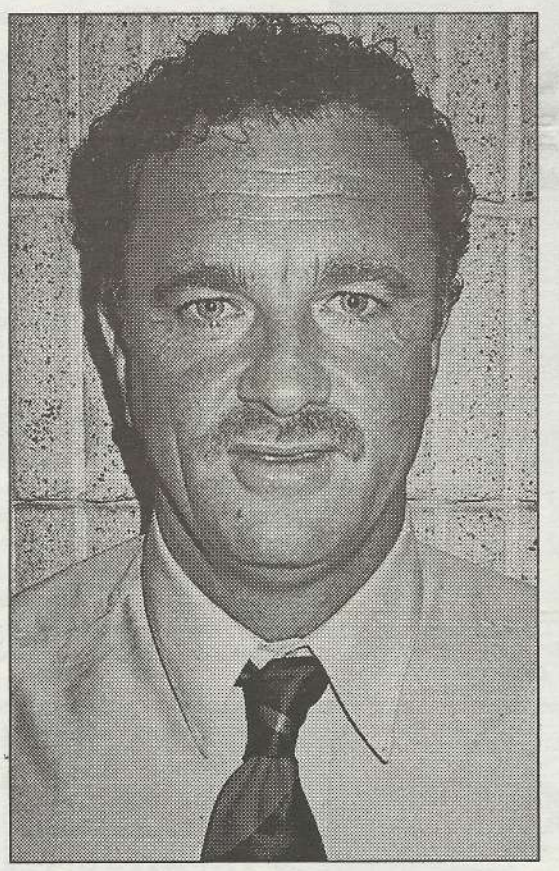
The Dinner has been organised by the Club's officials to salute Ronnie Corry's playing squad which two weeks ago became the newly crowned Champions of Oceania, having won all seven gruelling matches in just 13 days at the tournament staged in Port Moresby, New Guinea.

Wollongong, who are also the current League champions of Australia, now also Champions of Oceania, will fly to Spain in July to compete with 11 other National Club champions in FIFA's second World Club Championships.

The Finals in Spain will include such globally illustrious opposition such as Real Madrid, Deportivo La Coruna, Palmeiras (Brazil), Boca Juniors (Argentina), Jubilo Iwata (Japan), Esperanza (Tunisia) and Galatasaray (Turkey).

Four hundred tickets have already been sold for this Dinner.

It's the Wollongong Community's way of expressing to their heroic players and coaching staff, 'Welcome Back Champions'.



Graham Arnold: The new look Arnie — finally calls it a day—as a player.

What was a most unforgivable shame however, was the fact that not ONE official from Soccer Australia, bothered to go out to Sydney's Qantas terminal last Tuesday week to greet the Wollongong squad back into Australia, as Champions Of Oceania.

'Good Oil' now wonders, how many officials from Soccer Australia will be on the travelling 'team-sheet' for Spain, come July?.

'Good Oil' already hears that it's heaps.

Wollongong not only won the Oceania Championship for Australia, but it's believed that Soccer Australia also stands to receive some $2 million from FIFA because of Wollongong's glorious victory.

And it doesn't stop there.

It's also alleged that the Players' Union is also on the queue for a share of the spoils. Why?

The Wollongong squad got no assistance or moral support from any of the above.

In fact 'Good Oil' readily understands that it cost the Wollongong Wolves' officials over $180,000 to fly the squad over to New Guinea, plus all accommodation, food and beverages.

Ronnie Corry: Wollongong's hero coach.

All at Wollongong's expense.

Now we hear that the non-contributing Piranhas are in already.

Western Sydney Lions SC

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Pre season training has commenced.
Experienced Players & Goalkeepers Required
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First Grade U/21s & U/18s Players Wanted

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Tony Dunn 041 7558 316
MANAGER:
Joe 0419 435 737
TRAINING:
Tuesdays & Thursdays at 6.30pm
Bark Hutts Reserve, BELFIELD

Manny: 0414 622 502

PLAYERS WANTED

North Epping Rangers Soccer Club

Under 9's through to Premier League Division One in the 2001 Competition.

Registration Dates:
Friday 9th February 6.30pm-8.30pm
Saturday 10th February 2pm-5pm

At the Clubhouse
Boundary Rd, North Epping
Please Contact Club President
Steve Colquhoun — 9876 2000

OFF THE CROSSBAR

By Allan Crisp

SUMMER SESSIONS

It's official. Two Japanese teams are up-front and down under for training sessions that are fast becoming a South Australian ritual.

The annual visits by Japanese football talent will continue this month with J League clubs Verdy Kawasaki and Consadole Sapporo set to strut their stuff against local opposition.

For good measure, the Asian visitors will be pitted against each other in a full-scale dress rehearsal as they prepare for the second phase of their league campaigns.

This time, the SA State team, Adelaide City Force and reigning Premier League champions Blue Eagles will be the local sparring partners for the Japanese teams.

There will be an interesting twist to the Sapporo tour with its game against Blue Eagles scheduled to be played south of Adelaide at the Southern Sports Complex at Port Noarlunga, home base of the South Adelaide Panthers Aussie rules club.

Consadole, which toured Adelaide last season, will be particularly keen to impress since it won the J2 championship for 2000 and returns here as a fully-fledged J1 club.

In the past six years, six Japanese clubs and the Japanese national squad have conducted training camps in South Australia, swelling the State economy by a conservative $500,000 per annum.

For example, Sapporo will pitch its Adelaide tent at the Hyatt Hotel, while Verdy Kawasaki will call the Adelaide Hilton its home.

Verdy flew into Adelaide last Wednesday to begin its training schedule that will include twice daily sessions on non-match days.

The first 10-days of the visit will be occupied by utilising the of the Perfect Fit gymnasium at McLaren Vale and taking in the sandy stretches of Port Noarlunga, as well as, working out at the Southern Sports Complex.

The routine became a little more arduous last Saturday when Verdy visited the Woodside training course to tackle the ropes, mount the adventure tower, climb the challenge hill and embark on some after dark orienteering.

MATCH SCHEDULE

Thursday, February 8: Sapporo v Blue Eagles (Southern Sports Complex, 7pm)

Sunday, February 11: Verdy v South Australia (Hindmarsh Stadium, 7pm)

Tuesday, February 13: Sapporo v South Australia (Hindmarsh Stadium, 6pm)

Saturday, February 17: Sapporo v Verdy (Hindmarsh Stadium, 7pm)

Tuesday, February 20: Adelaide City v Sapporo (Hindmarsh Stadium, 7pm)

MELTA AIMS HIGH

Sergio Melta, former Adelaide City champion and current assistant to Force NSL coach Zoran Matic, is looking to coach at national league level.

Melta recently sold his successful hairdressing salon, The Cut House, in leafy Melbourne Street, North Adelaide to pave the way for a full-time coaching career.

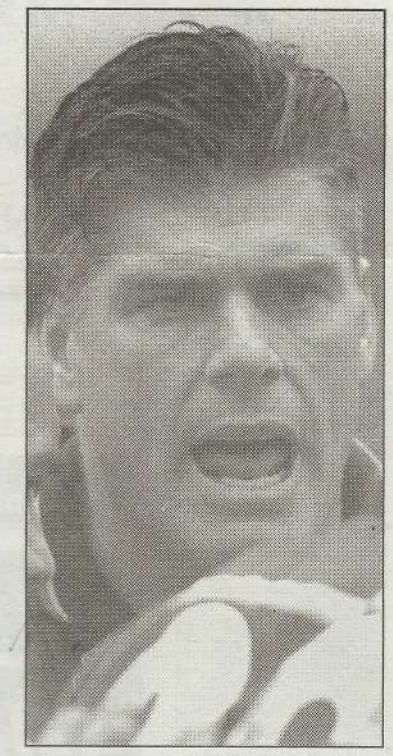
"Having sold the business, I'll now be able to look at the coaching options for the future," Melta said.

Melta held the NSL longevity record after racking up 445 appearances, but this season was passed by former Socceroo captain Alex Tobin, now with Parramatta Power.

The winner of the NSL Player of The Year award in 1984 and a treble winner of "The Advertiser" Golden Boots award in 1984, 1988 and 1989, Melta has an imposing collection of medallions.

But, modest Melta could not believe it when the South Australian Soccer Federation immortalised him by naming its Premier League Player of The Year award — The Sergio Melta Medal.

To be accorded such an honour (in 1995) while still an active player defied tradition, but it was an honour, truly and richly deserved by the magical Melta.



Gary Ayres: Coach of Adelaide Crows.

NEW NEST FOR CROWS

AFL club, the Adelaide Crows turned a few heads last week when they trained on the lush Hindmarsh Stadium soccer pitch.

Speculation spun that SA's most successful Aussie rules outfit was about to take over the stadium as a permanent training base.

Adelaide Football Club communications manager Stephen Trigg said he believed the Crows would use Hindmarsh on, "an occasional basis."

Trigg said Crows coach Gary Ayres sought permission to train at Hindmarsh after being impressed by the quality of the playing area.

"Gary saw the stadium as an alternative venue which would be ideal size for close quarter work in a reduced space." Trigg said.

The Crows present alternative training area is the Max Basheer Reserve which doubles as a car park on match days and consequently offers a hard surface.

ROCKED AND ROLLED

Rocky Aloisi's Raiders swamped the Seaford Surfers 5-0 in a, nevertheless, entertaining Summer Series clash last Monday night.

State League Seaford Surfers were not expected to ride roughshod over their Premier League hotshot opponents, but it seems nobody told the young southerners that the task was beyond them.

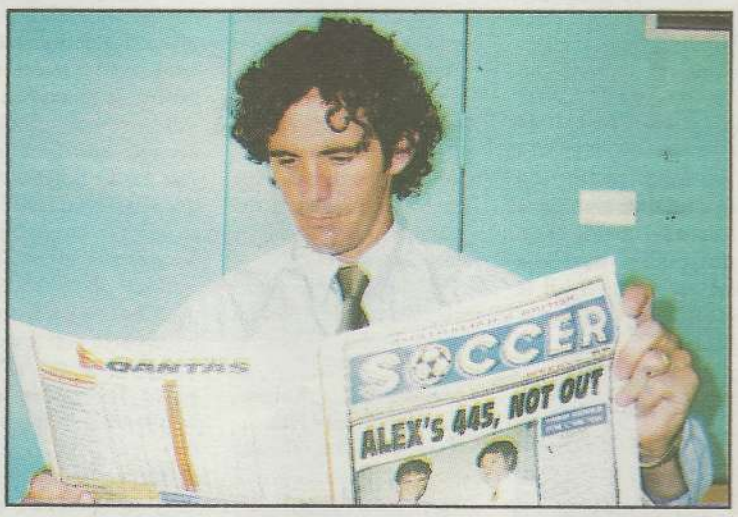
In the 10th minute an inswinging corner from Duncan Mather was goal-bound until Raiders goalkeeper Matthew Milosevic punched the ball clear.

The status quo was restored two minutes later as a cross by Raiders skipper Billy Karapetis was met by a diving header from Stanko Zilic, but Darren Schreuder proved his worth in the Seaford goal.

Justin Bralic netted from close range to break the short 14-minute deadlock before the Surfers repelled a further wave of Raider raids.

Paul Karittevlis made it 2-0 for the Raiders two minutes before half time and a goal two minutes after the restart from Joe Berlingeri began to emphasise the standard gap.

Seaford enjoyed its best period as it held the Raiders at bay for 26 minutes before a penalty kick converted by Raiders Cumberland recruit Chris Nichols shoved the scoreboard back into action.



Sergio Melta: Now seeks more laurels as full time Soccer coach.

Raiders second Cumberland signing, Damien Gagliardi joined his former Foxes team mate on the score-sheet five minutes from the final whistle to retain the Raiders unbeaten run.

Bustling Billy Karapetis emerged as man-of-the-match for his immaculate distribution, while Peter Sfyrios,Paul Karittevlis and super sweeper George Haralabakis supplied great support.

Trevor Maskell, Tom Connor, Gareth Green and Michael Paay were solid performers in a team of Seaford never-saydiers, who tried hard not to get out of their depth.

NORTH V SOUTH

The Para Hills (North) and Noarlunga Bulldogs (South) clash was not quite a "civil war" but the keenly contested joust provided excellent entertainment and classy football before Para Hills Knights emerged 2-1 victors.

This fine advertisement for State League soccer started with a series of lightning breaks with the quickest of the quick, Danny Breton scored the Knights first goal in the sixth minute.

Phil Robertson levelled for Noarlunga six minutes before half time when he belted a drive into the roof of the net after Michael Greco had cleared a shot off the Hills goalline.

Darren Steele accepted an assist from busy Mark Mulady to bury the winner two minutes before half time.

While the second half was scoreless, the quality remained with Knights second half substitute Michael Tunbridge leading the way with an eye-catching display of skill-laden awareness and tireless running.

Tunbridge, a first cousin of Adelaide City youngster Scott Tunbridge, certainly is a buzzing cousin who looks set for big things.

Hills coach Greg Mills and his assistant Noel Clark should be well pleased with Breton, Michael Moore, Evan Gooding and Raiders signing Michael Keens, while United goalkeeper Fraser McLean, Paul Carozo and Barry Higham won top ratings for the losers.

SA SUMMER SERIES

ROUND 3 RESULTS

Para Hills Knights 2 (Breton, Steele) **Noarlunga Bulldogs 1** (Robertson); **Raiders 5** (Bralic, Karittevilis, J. Berlingeri, Nicholls, Gagliardi) **Seaford Surfers 0; Blue Eagles 7** (Brooks 4, Artone, Sergi, Tsalaoutas) **Cobras 0; Cumberland Foxes 1** (Holmes) **Enfield Falcons 1** (Sanger); **Port Lion 2** (Kasperski, Hill) **Metro Stars 2** (Schimizzi, Moore); **Hills Hawks 1** (Kay) **Olympic 5** (Tsoukalas 2, Parissos 2, Albanese); **Birkalla 8** (Fusco 2, Westervelt, Gaffney, Nikas, Tsekinis, Mihalopoulos, Hagias) **Panthers 0; Campbelltown Red Devils 2** (Childs, D. Paris); **Mobury Jets 2** (Townley, tog) **Croydon Kings 1** (S. Barbaro); **Western Strikers 3** (Perrotta 2, McNeil) **White City 2** (Bernardino, Stanojevic).

ROUND 4

Saturday, February 10

Seaford v Noarlunga *(Karingal Reserve)*
Raiders v Para Hills *(The Paddocks)*
Enfield Falcons v Cobras *(Rushworth Reserve)*
Hills Hawks v Port Lion Pirates *(Karinya Reserve)*
Olympic v Metro Stars *(Ferryden Park)*
Panthers v Adelaide City *(O'Sullivan Beach)*
Birkalla v Campbelltown *(Camden Reserve)*
White City v Croydon Kings *(Woodville West)*

Allan Crisp can be heard on the 5RPH (1197AM) Breakfast Soccer Show each Tuesday from 7.30am-9am, along with SASF Coach of The Year Phil Scardigno, Channel 10 Sports Presenter Rob Popplestone and The Advertiser soccer writer Meno Toutsidis.

Letters to the Editor

Seven's wise move

Dear Sir,

As Soccer's big decision day draws closer all sorts of people are coming out to express their views. It's a good sign that so many people feel compelled to express their views.

One of the things that the incumbents who control Oz Soccer have always depended on is the apathy of soccer fans in Australia.

Seven's confirmation that they will end their association with the AFL and get serious about Soccer is going to have a bearing on who is going to be in control of Soccer in Australia.

Around the globe whenever a commercial TV network gets serious about a sport they tend to get their way. Bizarre as this may sound in the coming years Seven wil give Oz Soccer the type of coverage on commercial TV that everyone has dreamed about but never believed was possible.

For this we can thank the *Foxtel Nine* consortium who have unsurped the time honoured sytem where the mainstream Australian sports were evenly distributed amongst the key TV networks.

This has forced a reluctant Seven to embrace fringe sports like Soccer and other games to fill the gap.

The question now will be can Seven make Oz Soccer into a half decent ratings success. If they can, then they and their shareholders, will be laughing all the way to the bank courtesy of "Maestro" David Hill, who sold the rights for Australian Soccer (lock, stock and barrel) for a pittance on a longterm contract. Even when it appears that Oz Soccer wins a rare victory it still ends up losing.

R. Melor, Bondi.

Sir Alex, the Whinger

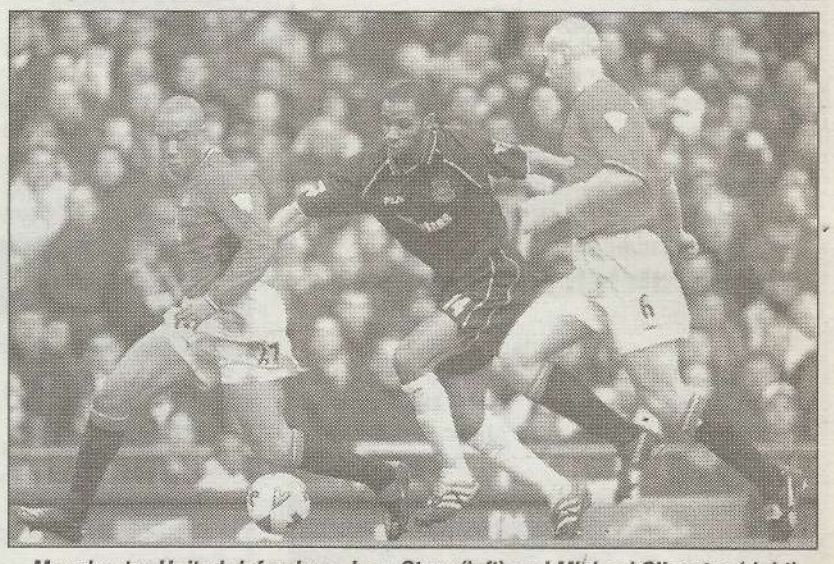
Dear Sir,

Here we go, here we go again. Sir Alex Ferguson must be the biggest "WHINGER" in British football as he will try to blame anything or anybody when his team gets beaten.

Well done Di Canio for playing to the whistle. That's what the referee is there for, to make decisions and what bit I saw on TV was that Manchester United players were standing with their arms up, like stuffed dummies.

Well that's one cup they are not going to win this year, try again next season.

Ex-Referee, Victoria.



Manchester United defenders, Jaap Stam (left) and Michael Silvestre (right) sandwich West Ham striker, Frederic Kanoute during last week's explosive English FA Cup match.

STERREY GETS ULTIMATUM

By Greg Danvers

Management of Newcastle United have sounded a clear warning to coach Lee Sterrey, his support staff and the players to perform in the remaining rounds or find a new job.

Sterrey's contract expires at the completion of the current NSL season and seven players are off contract at the end of the competition.

At least three current NSL coaches will be looking for a new club along with three full squads in the marketplace when Soccer Australia culls three clubs. Newcastle United management holds the whip hand.

United chairman Con Constantine and general manager Jock Graham met with Sterrey and then the players last week to explain the club's position and ambitions for the future. Speculation had been rife that Sterrey would be sacked in the short term but management have stood behind him for the remainder of the season.

"Lee Sterrey is contracted with the club for the year and he will see that term out," Jock Graham said last week.." He has the total support of owner Con Constantine and myself and we havemade the decision as a result of discussions in the last couple of days.

Lee Sterrey: Under-pressure Newcastle coach.

"The players were advised of that situation at a team meeting and the entire focus of the club is on the next thirteen weeks. We need to focus in on finishing the season on a very positive note and it is very important that we finish the second half of the season with a huge amount of momentum and confidence leading up to what will be a revised twelve team NSL."

As part of the submission to SA for the revamped league United, like all aspiring clubs, outlined their strategic plan for the next three years with the pinnacle for United to hoist the NSL cup within that time frame. With a youth development scheme already in place, three squads of players available on the market after the middle of March, when SA announces the 12 clubs for 2001-2002, and an evaluation of the 2000-2001 season available United will take some quantum steps towards achieving those goals.

"In our submission to Soccer Australia (on December 29) the club submitted a three-year plan and that really is the strategic direction of the club," Graham said of the club's future.

"The plan addresses a whole range of issues from youth development to stadium upgrades to sponsorship criteria and targets and a whole host of other issues concerning marketing and the like.

"The strategic direction of the club is there and it's a matter of implementing that over the next two or three years, reviewing that on an annual basis and it will form part of general review of all club operations at the end of this season.

"In relation to the twelve team competition we are very confident of being part of that next season and Newcastle United will not be there just to make up the numbers.

"Our three year plan very clearly indicates that we want to bring that championship cup back to this city and we will do what ever is possible to ensure that championship, in that time, is delivered to citizens of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley."

Andy Harper: Newcastle United striker.

★★★★

UNITED found the going tough in the goal scoring department last week on the flat and true surface at Ballymore.

With three strikers on the park the chances of getting a result on paper looked good, but football can be a frustrating game at the best and worst of times.

Brisbane were unlucky not to be ahead three or four nil at the break and immediately after the half-time interval, United suffered another cruel blow when their strongman striker Esala Masi strained his left hip and was replaced by Peter Juchniewicz in the 46th minute.

Masi received treatment overnight and on return to Newcastle, is expected to be available for selection this week as is Chris Zoricich after recovering from a fractured toe.

Each time former Brisbane striker Andy Harper touched the ball at Ballymore he received a jeer from the paltry crowd of around 1,000 at the rain swept home of Queensland Rugby.

COSMOS SEEK SOLACE IN PSYCHOLOGIST

By Graham Cooke

Canberra Cosmos officials have turned to a specialist sports psychologist to help them get the best out of their playing staff, and coach Tom Sermanni says he has noticed the difference in some aspects of the team's performance.

"For instance, these days we tend to play to the final whistle where in previous seasons we used to collapse and give up after we went a goal down," he said.

However, Kieran Morrow still feels there is room for improvement, especially in the erratic way the Cosmos will go from beating the best one week, to crashing to the bottom team the next.

While he has presided over group motivational talks, he says most of his work is now on a one-to-one basis. "In some cases players will ask to see me, in others maybe it is me who gets a feel that a particular player needs help," he said.

Or it could be Tom coming to me and saying that a player is off the rails and could I help?

"I think being young and a player myself [he is 27 and turns out for Belconnen in one of the ACT competition's lower divisions] helps develop a rapport.

Morrow says one of the greatest problems is confidence. "It is such an easy thing to lose, and that's just as much the case for the man in the street as for the football player.

"In the final analysis soccer players are human beings with the same likes and dislikes, hopes and fears as the rest of us, and they should be treated as such."

Morrow runs his own business, Morrow Psychological Consulting, which specialises in helping sports people. "I suppose that because of my involvement, the majority of my clients so far have been soccer players," he said.

SERMANNI DEMANDS BETTER RESULTS

By Graham Cooke

Canberra Cosmos coach Tom Sermanni says his team must begin to play better at home if they are to stand any chance of making the semi-finals.

Going into last week's match against Marconi Stallions at Bruce Stadium, Canberra had nine home games in their remaining 14 fixtures. Normally that would be cause for rejoicing, but true to their erratic form this season, the team have done better away from Bruce Stadium where they have had four out of their six wins.

Sermanni says a run of four consecutive home games, against Brisbane, Parramatta, Newcastle and Wollongong, will be crucial to the club's fortunes, both on and off the field.

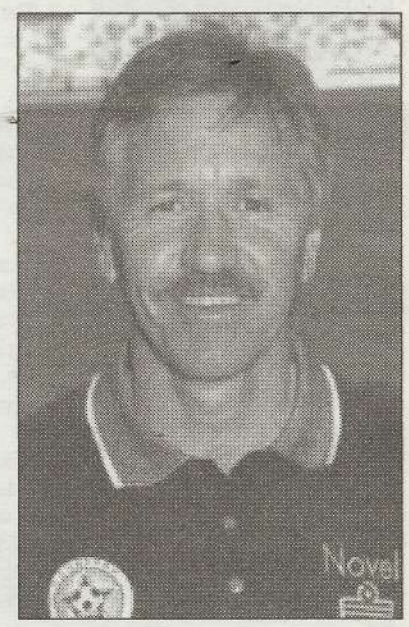
"We need a good harvest of points from these games and from the spectators' point of view, we must get some good wins against quality teams," he said.

"Away wins are all very well, but it is at home that the fans pay to see us perform."

Meanwhile Marcus Phillips went on to the operating table last week for a hernia problem. Andy Ravanello has still not trained since pulling a hamstring.

Sermanni said there had been a good roll up for the Cosmos summer coaching camps. "The first one for southside kids drew 26 and we had 30 the following week for the northside," he said.

"I don't think that's bad considering the local clubs have not begun training yet."



Tom Sermanni: Cosmos coach.

BRISBANE'S NEW INTERNATIONALS SET CLUB ABUZZ

In an announcement by National Youth Coach Ange Postecoglou three rising Brisbane Strikers stars were selected to participate in the upcoming Oceania Football Confederation Qualifiers later this month.

Brisbane Strikers midfielder Jade North and Wayne Srhoj will join the Under 20 team, known as the LG Young Socceroos whilst midfielder, Shane Smeltz will represent New Zealand in the quarters.

The outcome of the Oceania Football Confederation Qualifiers will determine the qualification into the World Youth Cup, which will be held in Argentina in June.

Brisbane Strikers coach John Kosmina said this is a great development opportunity for these three Brisbane Strikers players.

"Qualification into this event is a positive reinforcement about the quality of our players and the club," Kosmina said.

Jade North: One of Brisbane Strikers new national U20 invitees.

"To have three players representing Australia and New Zealand at youth level is a great step for them and the Brisbane Strikers back the boys 100%," he said.

Srhoj and North, both QAS players were awarded one year scholarships with the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in 1999 and represented Australia in the Under 17 World Youth Cup final against Brazil picking up silver before returning to the Brisbane Strikers.

Both Srhoj and North are hot property and have trialed in Europe and will be participating in more trials in the future.

For Smeltz, this is his first opportunity at Internaitonal footbal and coach John Kosmina is positive that he has got what it takes to succeed.

Kosmina is positive that the boys will be away from the team until March 4 when the final for the Oceania Qualifiers is held in Auckland.

Leichhardt Tigers Soccer Club Inc.

SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE

Vacancies still exist for players in the U/17 and U/12 age groups.

Please direct all inquiries to Tony Raciti on 0402 30 6666

MIXED REACTIONS GREET VPL SALARY CAP

By Bert van Bedaf

The Victorian Soccer Federation launched its Victorian Premier League season with three major announcements: the return of the final five, the introduction of a salary cap and an agreement with website provider Sportal.

Geoff Miles: VSF Chief Executive.

It also revealed the VPL had lost VicHealth as its naming rights sponsor. VicHealth's sponsorship of Victorian soccer amounted to $68,000 last financial year. Although the government body will continue to sponsor grassroots projects, such as the junior Goalkick program, the naming rights loss will have put a severe dent in the federation's income.

"We are holding discussions and negotiations to secure a major sponsor for our premier league," VSF chief executive Geoff Miles replied when asked to comment.

Victorian Sports Minister Justin Madden said soccer was on the rise.

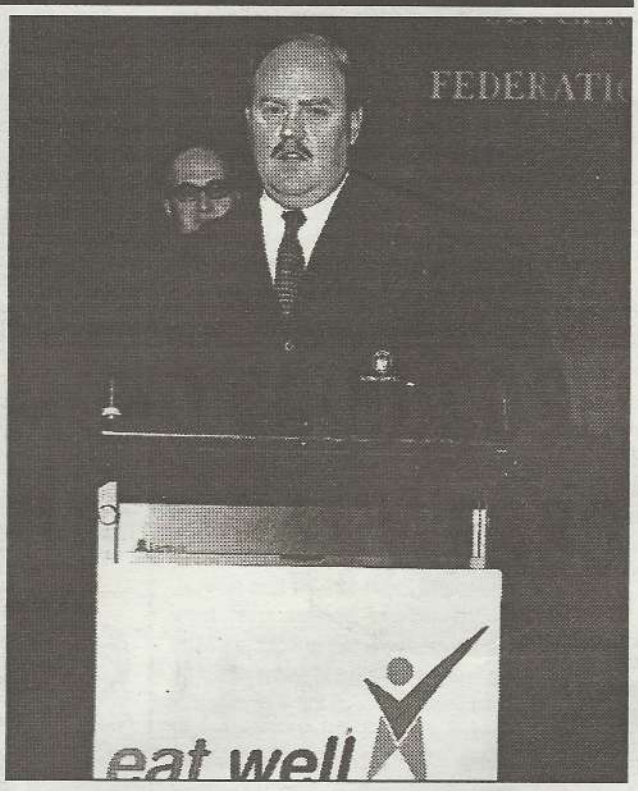
"You get a sense that soccer is gaining momemtum, because the profile is increasing. This promises to be an exciting season and may the best team win the final," Madden said.

The introduction of a salary cap, set at $85,000 per club and an extra $5,000 for reaching the finals, had officials winking and nudging in their chairs. Miles said the cap would "ensure the league can sustain realistic levels of payments".

But some clubs expressed disagreement and cynicism over the viability of the cap. The cap effectively means a player would front up on average for about $215 per match, calculated on a squad of 18 players over a 22-week competition.

Miles assured the VSF will be able to police the cap with tight rules and audits, saying there was a policing policy in place.

"We have a system in place and will ask clubs to submit records. If we find any irregularities we will investigate," Miles said. Coaches' salaries are not included in the cap.



Peter Ollerton: Heidelberg United's new coach.

Some clubs have recruited heavily in a bid to make the final five and be competitive for a future second division of the national league, if it eventuates next October.

Heidelberg United, for example, has recruited strongly. The arrival of Victorian coach of the year Peter Ollerton has sparked a major signing spree.

Among eight new players, it has acquired last season's Victorian player of the year and a former NSL Melbourne Knights midfielder Damian Vojtek from VPL rival St Albans.

Its other top recruits include Nick Lazarevski from Thomastown Zebras, who briefly played in Switzerland, 1999 VPL top scorer Peter Kakos from NSL club Eastern Pride and former NSL keeper Jim Kourtis (ex Melbourne Zebras, Pride and Sydney Olympic).

Berger president Elias Deliyannis backed the cap and said his club was within the limit. "Clubs will offer realistic wages for the league. We won't have any problems coming under the salary cap," Deliyannis said.

Justin Madden: Victorian Sports Minister.

Former Bulleen official and now a VSF commissioner Frank Ruffolo supported the cap.

"Clubs have been talking about it for three years. It makes sense from an economical point of view. It will help clubs to survive in the longer term," Ruffolo said.

"It will be in the interest of the clubs to abide by it and they will be the stronger for it. It teaches clubs to manage their resources a lot better and manage their (financial risk). It is pointless spending money they haven't got. It will even up the competition," he said.

Ruffolo admitted it would curtail the largesse of the richer clubs, such as former champion Bulleen and back-to-back title defender Green Gully, who had more money at their disposal through licenced venues.

"It will restrict clubs like Bulleen, but I haven't heard anyone complaining," he said.

Newly elected Bulleen president George Mirabella had his doubts about the cap, claiming $200 "would not pay petrol money".

"Clubs like Bulleen and Green Gully will have to do everything above board. We are licensed clubs. We'll have to be transparent. It (the cap) will be open to underhand deals by other clubs. It will destroy soccer in Victoria rather than help it," Mirabella said.

Green Gully coach Ian Dobson said, because the club has a licenced venue player payments would need to be strictly above board. "Everything will be conducted by the book," he said.

Just how many problems the salary cap will pose to clubs came to light when former Carlton NSL player John Markovski knocked on Green Gully's door. Markovski reportedly asked for a contract worth more than the entire salary cap. Victoria's most — travelled striker, whose NSL career spans more than a decade, does not come cheaply. By all accounts, he doesn't lace his boots for $200.

Ian Dobson: Coach of defending champions, Green Gully.

CHANNEL SEVEN BOWS TO PERTH PLEA

By Richard Kreider

After persistent and ultimately successful lobbying from Perth Glory officials, Channel Seven is to show at least five Glory games from the remaining home and away fixtures beginning with the away visit to Sydney Olympic on Sunday February 18.

Devoted Glory fans have already been able to enjoy a couple of away matches at packed Perth hotel functions, but the move to broadcast the games on free-to-air television is a huge breakthrough for Perth's soccer-hungry public and perhaps a taste of things to come from the television giants nationwide after having lost the broadcast rights to the AFL.

After the Olympic clash, the next away match will be Newcastle United on March 23 and Canberra Cosmos on April 29.

There are home games also planned but they will be delayed telecasts. Firstly, Northern Spirit on March 10 followed by the Melbourne Knights on April 14.

Meanwhile, Perth Glory's dynamic goal-scoring defender Jamie Harnwell, who rescued his side from defeat in their previous two outings, could find himself being challenged for any future headlines by his younger brother Todd Harnwell who signed a 2 *-year deal early last week.

Similarly with 23-year old Jamie, Todd (20) comes from the State League club Sorrento where he plays in a ring wing role. However, because of the wealth of talent in the Glory squad, he is not likely to feature for the NSL side until next season.

Jamie converted a dazzling long-range strike, which earned a share of the points against Wollongong Wolves a fortnight ago, and repeated the feat last Sunday with a bullet-like close-range header when they drew with South Melbourne after again falling behind.

Glory coach Bernd Stange gave Todd the nod after coming through three months of trialling.

Stange believes he has the same fighting qualities as his elder brother, namely his attitude, passion and commitment.

"He adds another element from WA to the squad," said Stange to the Perth's West Australian newspaper.

FIFA accredited assistant referee Patrick McCaffrey is latest official to come from the west to gain international recognition, after jetting out for New Caledonia yesterday to participate in the Oceania under-20 World Cup qualifiers . McCaffrey, who received his FIFA badge two years ago, has to first overcome a rigorous fitness test, along with the other officials, before being allowed to officiate in the competition.

McCaffrey follows in the footsteps of Perth only other FIFA referee Eddie Lennie, who is unable to make the tournament because of work commitments.

Letters to the Editor

EDDIE THOMSON'S MEMORY LAPSE

Dear Sir,

Eddie Thomson is back and on SBS recently he proceeded to sternly lecture Robbie Slater and others on the error of their ways.

According to E.T., if the players would only lift their game then crowds would flock back to the NSL and all would be right in the world of Oz Soccer.

He also ridiculed the idea of outsiders or new faces in charge of Oz Soccer.

Then to slightly confuse the issue,he suggested some competent ex-players be placed on the board of S.A.

Eddie only recently returned from a stint in Japan,coaching a J-League side but it seems that his memory had sadly declined during the four years he has been away. The old E.T. would well remember that all the NSL clubs he coached were very successful and yet failed to draw decent crowds.

In the case of Sydney Olympic, Eddie was one of few coaches to give the Olympic faithfuls real success but crowds only increased marginally.

Of course good winning football is a vital ingredient in drawing crowds but there are at least two other factors that in their own way are also as important. Of the current NSL clubs, only Perth Glory comes close to meeting this criteria while most of the others never have or never will meet the standard.

Anyone with any sense can only agree with Eddie (ET) when he urges that "qualified" (competent) ex-players should be on the board of S.A. and not just in token numbers.

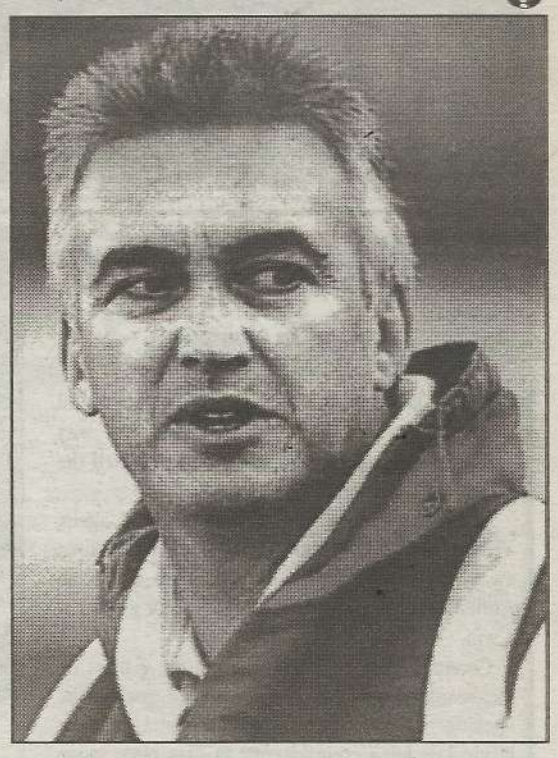
However once again Eddie's memory has let him down badly. Over the years, various suitable ex-players have put themselves forward only to have the door shut in their face.

No prizes for guessing why the Powers-that-be in Oz Soccer are adopt this policy consistently. Worse still these are the same people who Eddie was seen defending as more suitable to retain control of Oz Soccer in preference to so-called outsiders which is all rather confusing.

Eddie I have a great deal of respect for what you have achieved in the world of football but your comments on SBS are perplexing and surprising and not like the old Eddie Thomson.

Perhaps you really do need a long holiday to restore your memory and perspective.

R. Melor,
Bondi. NSW.



Eddie Thomson: In the line of fire.

ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL

Dear Sir,

It's interesting to note the great divide between the panellist's on SBS's On the Ball programme.

On one side you have those in favour of a complete overhaul of Soccer Australia's administrators like current players Andy Harper and Robbie Slater, along with Kyle Patterson who understands the problem.

On the other side are those with an indifferent attitude like Paul Williams, Tony Palumbo and Johnny Warren because they are heavily-involved on the international side of the world game.

If the local game ever became too popular, William's and Palumbo's segment on the English Premier League and Palumbo's segment on Italy's Serie "A" would become irrelevant.

As for Johnny Warren, he continually hob-nob's around the world to watch every international event on offer, whether the public is interested or not, so the local game is of secondary importance to him as well.

You also have to laugh at Eddie Thomson, the former Socceroo coach of Australia, at his ignorance, not to mention arrogance of AFL affairs, who by the way have not lost any teams in their competition for over 50 years.

South Melbourne Swans were relocated to Sydney in 1982 and Fitzroy Lions merged with the Brisbane Bears in 1996 to become the Brisbane Lions, something that can't be said about Soccer in Australia.

How many have dropped out or fallen by the wayside in the past 24 years since the NSL first kicked off in 1977? Unless you are a true soccer supporter over a long period you would have lost count by now.

As for Jeff Kennett or any other politician, he may or may not be the answer, but his record of turning the Victorian economy around from a basket case, to a healthy vibrant economy in less than eight years speaks for itself. Also if Basil Scarcella has done well (according to Eddie) in turning the finances of Soccer Australia's position around from the red to black, why did he jump ship when the job was only half done?

Could it be that he doesn't want to face any criticism when the restructuring down to 12 teams comes later this year? The Oceania job may look more prestigious, but without Australian there would be no Oceania Confederation.

If it was for the prestige of being involved internationally, then that's where the problem lies. All of those in charge love the international side of the world game, that the domestic scene simply becomes of secondary importance.

Dominic Scullino,
Nerang. Qld.

Action recorded during a recent National Soccer League game between Perth and Wollongong.

Wanted: A Breakaway League

Dear Sir,

If the rumours are true and Tony Labbozzetta is voted in as the new Chairman of Soccer Australia, I would whole heartedly endorse a new breakaway competition.

It would gather momentum anyway, as he is not in favour of any real reduction in the number of teams in the NSL, nor is he in favour of a twc-conference system (whose weakness is that it's not a full national competition, when it's split into two halves).

As for a Second Division, it's still on the drawing board as it has been for the past 24 years.With that line of thinking, plus four new consortiums waiting in the wings, unless it becomes an 18 or 19 team competition next season (which everyone agrees is too many) a breakaway APL competition is a virtual certainty.

FIFA bans won't mean much as Australia's best are all playing overseas in Europe and elsewhere.

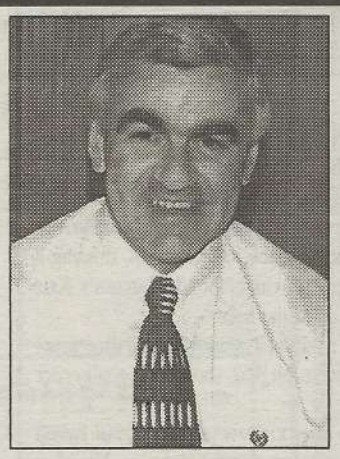
Those three are the Wollongong Wolves who need to expand their supporter-base by playing half there home games at Shark Park, the home of Cronulla Sutherland Rugby League club.

A name change to "Illawarra Sharks" will do the trick. The other is the Northern Spirit who need to disassociate itself from the Glasgow Rangers, as not everyone on the North Shore of Sydney likes the Rangers.

Dear Readers,

The Australia and British Soccer Weekly will greatly appreciate it if letters to the editor are henceforth made to be brief.

While we wish to always publish readers' opinions and viewpoints, the brevity of such letters will go a long way in easing production difficulties. Thanks.



Basil Scarsella: SA President.

If you are a Celtic or other Scottish team supporter, you'll give the Spirit support a complete miss now.

They will also need a new coach to get a lot of their missing supporters back. The third one is the Football Kingz. They need to relocate to Wellington, where the support for soccer there is a lot stronger and greater.

The other four of course are virtual automatic entries. They are of course Perth Glory which doesn't need any explaining, South Melbourne, the most successful Victorian club in the heartland of Aussie Rules, where no new consortium is guaranteed 100% success in future.

I left out Canberra at this stage, because nobody seems to be able to make it work properly in the national capital. An average crowd of 2,000 is of no use or benefit to anyone in a new competition.

However, the door could be left open in future when it moves to a 12 team competition, only when necessary.

Whatever happens in future, a new breakaway organisation must have its act together, with a professional independent committee in charge to look after the interests of all clubs as members of a united family.

Even though football today is a business, no matter how strong a club is financially, it won't mean a damn thing if all the others went broke and they had no-one to play against.

Even just three to four strong clubs can't form a proper competition of their own. No club should be cut from the family without help, at the first sign of financial difficulty.

It should be allowed to get back on its feet with loans from the head body if necessary, until it's proven that it's no longer financially viable to continue to do so into the future.

If the NRL can get 30 to 40 million dollars a year for Rugby League, and the AFL can get double that amount for Aussie Rules, then soccer should be able to get 20 to 30 million a year also, after proving it's success on the field and off within a season or two $20 million a year should be the absolute minimum.

Whatever happens someone with the right credentials needs to take the bull by the horns to get the ball rolling for no matter who is voted in as Chairman of Soccer Australia nothing much will change, while Channel Seven still has Seven years to run with the rights not to show Soccer on Prime Time television.

Make no mistake, this mob and it's predecessors have betrayed the soccer fans of this country badly by selling the TV rights for a pittance ($2 million a year = 30 pieces of silver) just so they can pay their own bills, but not enough to market the long game or do anything for the clubs in trouble.

After 24 years in office it's time for a complete change. Even political parties don't stay in power that long anymore.

Dominic Scullino,
Nerang. Qld.

ETHNIC FEARS IN OZ SOCCER UNFOUNDED

Dear Sir,

These are reflections about the letter from Mr Stephan Prendz of Newcastle, NSW, to ABSW of 16.01.01. I quote "... that it was exceptional that 14,000 Greek Australians had been at Bob Jane Stadium to witness the Greek derby.

It is sad infact, that 150 other nationalities, not withstanding dinky di Australians, were excluded."

Dear Mr Prendz you are the one, who excluded yourself. We won't send to you an invitation card, but you are, and all the 150 nationalities with the dinky di Australians are very welcome at any time!!

Please just do come all of you; we promise to you, that we won't bite or eat you! (Since 1700 we; the Europeans, are not cannibals anymore!)

You — I hope — understand, that we will speak in our maternal language. So do not be suspicious, that we speak of you; or we are laughing about; of your beautiful shapes (front or back) of your wives or daughters! (God forbid).

Just it is easier to use our first language, as our second one. You know — let's say — two Aussies are living in Italy, in Rome; when they meet, they will speak Australian, because is natural; they won't use the spaghetti language. And we also do the same, with the English.

Forget your shyness, and do come to our ethnic-organised soccer games, and enjoy the spectacles. I give you my solemn word, that none of you will be barbecued!!!

R. Marton
Tingalpa. Qld.

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

PARRAMATTA POWER 1
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 3

By Julian Murphy

The last time the Melbourne Knights found themselves in the NSL top-six was way back in round two when they defeated the Parramatta Power.

In order to reach such a lofty position again, Vlado Vanis' side had to repeat the result, this time away from home. The resurgent Knights did so, an Adrian Cervinski hat-trick the catalyst for a solid 3-1 win.

Cervinksi didn't take long to get the visitors on the board, stunning the Power with a goal in the opening minute. A slip from Parramatta defender David Lee left Cervinski with an easy close range finish after his team mates Andy Vargas and Daniel Vasilevski had worked the ball in from the right.

After the early set back the Power seized the initiative and pressured for an equaliser. At every opportunity the home side would seek to use Hamilton Thorp's height advantage up front but the big striker was unable to convert his chances.

The Knights defence were forced to battle hard and young 'keeper Lupce Acevski had to make a couple of spectacular saves for them to preserve their lead. He had to be at his acrobatic best to keep out a powerful shot from Steve Berry and a deflected Lee free kick.

The Knights never looked like adding to Cervinski's opener in the first half even though Andy Vargas was having a superb game in the centre of the field. He provided the pass for their next best opportunity only to see Toto Da Costa push his shot across the face of goal.

Power coach David Mitchell introduced Joel Griffiths to the game after half time but the home side's play inexplicably lost much of its first half lustre.

Adrian Cervinski: Sealed Parramatta's fate with an emphatic hat-trick display.

With defender Sash Ognenovski wearing Thorp like a glove, the Knights appeared content to get players behind the ball and wait for counter-attacking opportunities.

This is exactly how they doubled their lead in the 69th minute when a looping ball from Vasilevski found Cervinski. The Knights striker controlled the pass beautifully and thundered a shot towards the bottom right hand corner of the Parramatta goal. Power 'keeper Les Pogliacomi showed great reflexes to get down to Cervinski's strike but the pace of the ball saw it ricochet off his left arm and up into the roof of the net.

A Milan Blagojevic goal four minutes from time gave Parramatta a faint chance to salvage a draw but Cervinksi killed off the game with an almost immediate reply. His hat-trick goal almost a carbon copy of his previous one, this time coming from a tighter angle and not allowing Pogliacomi any chance.

The result sees the Knights leapfrog the Power into sixth position and their good recent run continues to silence the doubters. On the other hand the Power are enduring something of a mid-season slump. The only competition points the Power have picked up since round twelve have come courtesy of the defunct Carlton.

With only one draw all season, it has been a case of feast or famine for the club from Sydney's west. There is still plenty of time for David Mitchell's side to secure a finals berth but they will have to arrest their current slide as soon as possible. If they don't they may find they are kept out of the top-six but the Knights, a scenario that appeared highly unlikely only a few weeks ago.

CANBERRA COSMOS 1
MARCONI STALLIONS 2

Royce Brownlie (left): He scored one of the goals that buried Cosmos.

By Graham Cooke

A ruthlessly professional display from the Marconi Stallions brought them the three points against Canberra Cosmos with a 2-1 win that could easily have gone the other way.

The difference between the sides can be summed up in the 15 minutes before half time when Marconi scored their goals, and the last half hour, as Canberra struggled to get back on terms.

A disgruntled Cosmos coach, Tom Sermanni, summed it up when he bemoaned the collapse in his team's organisation after they went a goal down. "We lost one and then six minutes later another," he said. "That left us chasing the game against one of the most composed teams in the competition."

The fact that Canberra clawed a goal back and in the last minute of the game could have shared the points when Mark Hagger's header went centimeters wide, was a tribute to the character of the players "but that does not excuse what happened before," he said. That involved Marconi taking the lead after an unbelievable lapse involving two of the most experienced players in the Canberra team.

Japanese defender Hiroshi Miyazawa sent a pass to Milton Cortes, which the normally safe midfielder contrived to lose. Miyazawa turned his back in frustration, missing a chance to cut out the cross, which found Marconi's Kris Trajanovski on the far side of the field.

With defenders out of position Trajanovski had time to set up Royce Brownlie whose angled shot beat goalkeeper Angelo Konstantinou.

In the 40th minute the visitors struck again when Tranjanovski himself was given too much room, allowing him to place a shot into the corner of the net.

Substitute Naoki Imaya put Canberra back in the game when he received a peach of a pass from Cortes to find a gap in the Marconi defence.

It was to be the visitors' only lapse. Miyazawa tried to upset their rhythm by making a rare foray upfield for a free kick. Cortez almost found him, but at the last moment goalkeeper David Aceski was out to whip the ball off his head.

In the last minute Mark Hagger did get head to ball, and Aceski was thankful to see the resulting effort go wide.

Canberra lost top scorer Jon Angelucci with a corked thigh three minutes before half time, and David Milin was also replaced after injuring his knee. There were no such problems for Marconi where Simon Bell, Dominic Longo and Trajanovski all had outstanding games.

Coach Eddie Krncevic said his team had come through a very difficult game with flying colours. "The conditions were hot and humid and after the midweek match against Red Star there were a few players with dead legs," he said.

"After scoring two goals in quick succession we were looking for the third to kill off the game. Instead Canberra came back at a good time for them and there was no way we would relax until the final whistle."

EASTERN PRIDE 1
FOOTBALL KINGZ 3

By Damian Tripodi

Passion, vehemence and commitment were not enough for Eastern Pride to stop the sporadic Football Kingz from going home with smiles on their faces following the Kiwi outfit's 3-1 win over the Gippslanders in their encounter at Mobil Park on Saturday evening.

Although the scoreline would indicate a walk over, The Kingz were not at all dominant factor. The Pride players committed themselves from the beginning to the end, creating some good opportunities and putting pressure on their opponents.

The difference was, however, that the Kingz were able to finish better and were lightening fast in closing down any forward movement by Pride.

Following a fairly even opening, with both sides trying to break through, four minutes before half-time the deadlock was broken when the Kingz Paul Urlovic took a free-kick from just outside the penalty box. Pride keeper Bojo Jevdejic got his hands to the ball but could not block it. The Kingz Denis Ibrahim took the rebound and slotted the ball into the back of the net.

Five minutes into the second half the visitors extended their lead through Aaron Lines from a well calculated Mark Burton cross.

At the 67th minute of the game, the visitors made it three when Urlovic scored, this time from a build up created by Lines.

Although three goals down the fighting Pride never gave up and made several assaults at goal.

At the 73rd minute, newcomer Angie Motsiopoulos scored on his home ground debut from a set up from the never relenting John Hutchinson, who, although on losing side, was clearly the best player on the ground.

Other to perform well for Pride were Dong Ki Kim, Robbie Puca and Mark Atkinson.

John Hutchinson: Despite the defeat of Eastern Pride, he was the Man-of-the-Match.

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

STH MELBOURNE 1
PERTH GLORY 1

By Bert van Bedaf

Billed as the match of the round and with Cain versus Abel in goal at either end, this should have been a clash of biblical proportions. But it wasn't.

South Melbourne and Perth Glory finished their encounter at Bob Jane stadium last Sunday with a 1-1 draw in front of an epic cast of almost 13,000, who went home their glasses half full (Perth) and half empty (South).

The clash came alive in the second half. A goal each a minuteapart settled the contest. A missed penalty by captain Paul Trimboli proved costly for South.

But South coach Mike Petersen later said he thought it shouldn't have been a penalty and the fact Trimboli missed it squared the initial decision. Justice done, in other words.

German coach Bernd Stange praised the size of the crowd but deplored the state of the pitch and the standard of football.

"A couple of years ago Perth played against South Melbourne and we had a 3,500 crowd. Today we had a 12,000 crowd. That is excellent," Stange said.

"But the level of the game wasn't so good. I expected a little bit more class from both teams. This was an average performance. At the end of the day both teams did not deserve more than a point.

"But it keeps the premiership wide open. Six points are nothing today in soccer. There's still a long way to go and we'll see the South team again in the finals," he said.

"A draw was a fair result," Petersen agreed. "It was an intriguing contest and from our point of view we're reasonably happy.

"We went to sleep after we scored the goal and Perth broke on the counter. I didn't think it was a penalty, so that squared things," he said.

Stange and Petersen said the uneven pitch also had played a role in the standard of play.

"The pitch was in a poor state. It was so destroyed and not up to NSL standard. In the national league we need class pitches," Stange said.

"The ground can't deal with extreme weather. There's a fungus underneath the surface and sections (of the pitch) just die if the temperature is over 30 degrees," Petersen said.

A first-half downpour further deteriorated the pitch and play remained average, centred on a tight midfield battle. Both sides searched for openings that rarely presented themselves.

South Melbourne's Vaughan Coveny holds off Perth's Scott Miller.

South issued its attacking message with a 4-3-3/3-4-3 formation, while Perth adopted a 4-4-2 stance, with two midfielders regularly dropping back to help out in defence.

Michael Petkovic in goal for South and brother Jason for Perth were called on to intervene on a couple of occasions each before the break.

South fumbled a major opportunity to hit the front, when Ljubo Milicevic appeared to have brought down Andy Vlahos inside the box only three minutes into the second half. Referee Brett Hugo awarded a dubious penalty.

But Perth escaped when Trimboli missed from the spot for the second time in two weeks. Last week his penalty was saved, this time he side-footed the ball high over the bar.

Jason Petkovic intercepted a Boutsianis cut-back on 55 minutes, but could do little to stop him shortly after as the South pressure mounted.

Trimboli put Panopoulos through on 56 minutes. The pint-sized midfielder worked his way into the box and provided Boutsianis, who struck with a curving left-foot shot into the far corner.

It seemed South has gained the momentum, but Perth equalised a minute later.

Wehrman, on the right, launched a cross into the box and an unmarked Jamie Harnwell struck with a glancing header off the left post.

South continued to press, looking for the winning goal to avenge their 1-0 loss (and only defeat so far this season) to Perth in round two.

But the six-man Glory wall prevailed against the efforts on Boutsianis and Vlahos, who'd replaced injured Kalogeracos after 20 minutes.

BRISBANE 0
NEWCASTLE UTD 0

By Glenn Davis

Brisbane Strikers' hopes of celebrating a first-up win on their new home ground at Ballymore was washed away when substitute midfielder Peter Dwyer was controversially sent-off against Newcastle United last Friday.

Dwyer's dismissal with more than 30 minutes of the game remaining was the turning point in which the Strikers had to settle for a nil-all draw in wet and windy conditions.

Ballymore proved to be huge hit with fans and Strikers officials, despite a small crowd of about 1,000 braving rain and windy conditions on the night.

The venue, the home of rugby union in Queensland, is more suited to soccer than Suncorp Stadium and although it's seating capacity is far less it provides spectators with a closer view.

The scoreless draw was a bad result for the homeside who needed to win to keep its faint hopes alive of making the Top Six.

Coach John Kosmina isn't conceding his side can't make the finals and continues to be happy with the way his outfit is performing.

Although the game was deadlocked prior to Dwyer's send-off, the Strikers were in total control and it appeared only time before they would crack Newcastle's defence.

Dwyer came off the bench after only 20 minutes when midfielder Nick Meredith was bodycharged and hit with an accidental elbow to the neck by Newcastle's John Buonavoglia. Meredith was eventually stretchered off and taken to hospital for precaution.

The first half was one-way traffic for the Strikers with at least six good scoring opportunities missed while Newcastle failed to have a serious shot on goal.

Midfielder Peter Grierson almost got his side off to a dream start in the third minute pushing his shot wide of the upright while new signing Peter Buljan had a sharp chance go wide two minutes later as he shrugged off a Newcastle tackle inside the box.

The Strikers' best player, Jeromy Harris, did all the hard work as he turned Newcastle's Todd McManus inside out in the 28th minute but the visitor's cover defence scrambled home in time to smother his shot in front of an open goal.

Peter Dwyer: Saw red at a crucial moment.

The Strikers' had appeals for two penalties turned down by local referee Peter Green, who was officiating in his first home game after several interstate matches. The first came on the half hour when Newcastle defender Andy Roberts looked to hand ball while the second came ten minutes after the break when

McManus also appeared to hand-ball in a sliding tackle on Harris.

Newcastle's first serious attempt came when former Strikers forward Andy Harper, who was heckled most of the night by his former fans, struck his 50th minute attempt wide after being positioned in the box perfectly by Travis Dodd.

After 58 minutes the Strikers still looked to be dominating before Green marched Dwyer for his second bookable offence which some Strikers' officials later described as ludicrous.

The now ten-men Strikers began to withdraw as Newcastle coach Lee Sterry changed tactics by pushing three-men into the forward line.Despite being on the back pedal for lengthy parts of the last half hour, the Strikers defence held firm while their attack continued to show patches of brilliance.

Harris almost pulled off a superb goal in the 75th minute with a deflected header off a chip pass from Alan Davidson while Newcastle keeper Bob Catlin brought off the save of the night with ten minutes to go.

Strikers' substitute Shane Smeltz put in a cross from the left to Wayne Srhoj whose header was knocked down to the bottom left hand corner post , where veteran Catlin dived with an outstretched hand to deflect the goal bound shot wide of the upright.

SYDNEY UNITED 2
ADELAIDE CITY 1

By Arvind Hickman

Sydney United are now on the brink of the NSL top six after defeating the Adelaide City Force 2-1 at Sydney United Sport Centre last Sunday.

Compulsory drink breaks relieved both teams from the sweltering weather conditions, however nobody could prevent a red hot Cummins Menapi from scoring both of United's goals.

Sydney United coach, Alan Hunter, was pleased with his team's performance and even hinted on a top six finish for this season.

"To be honest the game should have been over when we should have been up three or four nil. We created more opportunities than they did throughout the game. I thought we showed a lot more grit in very heavy conditions," he said.

"I always look at the top six and I don't worry about confidence, it's what we build on. Our goal is to achieve a lot more than what we did last year."

Sydney United went into the half time break 1-0 ahead after creating the better chances and controlling a majority of possession.Solomon Islands international, Cummins Menapi, scored the opening goal in the 28th minute after Zlatko Arambasic turned the Force defence inside out before feeding the striker with a probing pass. Menapi turned on the ball and surged forward before slotting it past the helpless Adrian Cagalj in goal.

United's second goal came only three minutes after the interval and was the best move of the game.

Alan Hunter: United coach chasing a top six finish.

Shane Webb led a fast break and played the ball to Arambasic in space on the right side of the penalty area.

Arambasic then cut the ball back across goal for Menapi who finished with the simplest of tap-ins.

Sydney United continued to press with Tom Pondeljak having another fine game orchestrating the attack.

A couple of one-on-one opportunities were wasted by Arambasic who was starting to struggle with the heat.

The Force were unlucky not to have pulled one back after 65 minutes when Kosta Salapasidis headed the ball onto the cross-bar.

A goal did eventually come for Adelaide City in the 68th minute when Scott Tunbridge hit an unstoppable shot in the bottom left corner after a dangerous cross from Louis Brain deceived the United defence.

However United were not to be denied and are now knocking on the door of a finals berth, only one point adrift of the top six. Adelaide City are three points behind United but have a game in hand.

SYDNEY OLYMPIC 2
NORTHERN SPIRIT 1

By Julian Murphy

The Northern Spirit's disappointing season continued when they were beaten by a Sydney Olympic side that had to play out the final half hour of the game a man down.

For the third consecutive game, the Spirit lost after scoring the opening goal before allowing the opposition to hit back twice.

Poor discipline from Olympic's Kresimir Marusic on the hour mark resulted in the midfielder's dismissal when the home side had the game firmly under control. Fortunately for Olympic, Marusic's rush of blood didn't prove to be too costly as the Spirit failed to test Clint Bolton in the Olympic goal. Only substitute Simon Catanzaro could manage a shot on target in the final third of the game and this was a tame long-range effort that Bolton easily collected.

For the first time this season Branko Culina left Nick Carle out of the Olympic starting line-up, opting instead for Pablo Cardozo and Dylan McAllister up front. It was a move that paid off as both strikers notched up first half goals.

It was the first visit to Belmore as a Spirit player for Gabriel Mendez and his every touch was greeted with a chorus of jeers from the home crowd. Unsurprisingly, Mendez was delighted when he opened the scoring in the 28th minute. A delightful long ball from Matt Langdon found Spirit striker Ben Burgess who cut the ball back for Mendez to drive home beneath Bolton.

Three minutes later the Spirit defence made the mistake of playing the linesman's flag rather than the referee's whistle. In his first start of the season McAllister had no problem placing the ball past Spirit keeper Paul Henderson as the Spirit players waited for referee Gerry Connolly to notice his assistant. Despite vociferous protests from both the visiting players and their bench, Connolly awarded the goal and scores were level.

One of the games more absorbing contests was between Olympic defender Scott Baillie and the Spirit's most consistent performer this season, Ben Burgess. However it was to come to a premature end when Burgess hobbled from the field with an injury shortly before half time.

Dylan MacAllister: Scored the opening goal.

Whilst the Spirit bench were deciding whether Burgess was fit to continue, Olympic grabbed the lead through Pablo Cardozo. The diminutive striker got his foot to a lovely Elias Augerinos cross to pick up his third goal since returning from Greece.

Burgess failed to return to the game and the Spirit spent the first fifteen minutes of the second half on the back foot. Troy Halpin and George Goutzoulis were dominating play in the centre of the field and Augerinos and Lindsay Wilson had the run of the flanks. Craig Foster made way for Catanzaro, but neither he or fellow substitute Daniel Watkins could penetrate the Olympic defence. The Spirit defence performed admirably throughout the game but, even after Marusic received his marching orders, the midfield couldn't provide Catanzaro and Watkins with enough balls.

The game ended with the now familiar chant of 'Arnold out' emanating from the Spirit supporters and any failure to get a result against bottom side Eastern Pride next week could end the Spirit's finals aspirations.

Things are looking decidedly better for Sydney Olympic, the 2-1 victory sees them in outright second place ahead of the Perth Glory. Time will tell whether or not they can avoid a repeat of last season's late fade-out, but the home clash with the Glory in a fortnight may give some indication.

Transfers fly Thick and Fast

By Bert van Bedaf

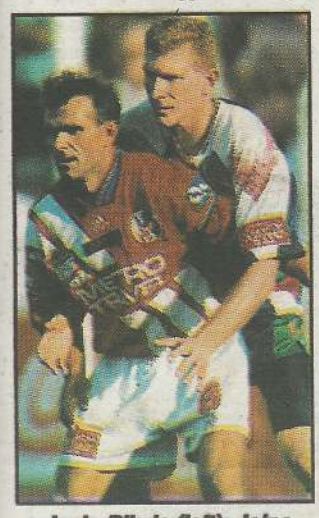
Victorian Premier League clubs have completed their cloak-and-dagger acts and finalised their hirings and firings at the start of the 2000-2001 season.

Title defender Green Gully lost striker Sash Becvinovski to Altona Magic, George Georgiadis to Heidelberg United and Jani Suric to Altona East. It gained Ice Kutlesovski, who returned from Preston. Former Carlton striker John Markovski is interested in joining the Cavaliers.

"This will be another challenging season for us," Gully coach Ian Dobson said. "Every season is a challenge for me. I hope the players are up to it as well," the champion coach said.

The Cavaliers hope to win their third title in a row, but for the first time in a finals playoff.

Heidelberg United has recruited prodigiously. The Bergers have signed 2000 Victorian player of the year Damian Vojtek from St Albans, former Bentleigh Green, Melbourne Zebras and East Gippsland 'keeper Jim Kourtis from Sydney Olympic, Eric Vasiliadis from Fawkner, George Georgiadis from Green Gully, Nick Lazarevski from Thomastown (ex Melbourne Raiders), Nick Rossios from Bentleigh Greens, Nick Schwall from Bulleen and Peter Kakos from NSL club Eastern Pride.



Josip Biksic (left): Joins Fawkner Blues.

It also acquired 2000 Victorian coach of the year Peter Ollerton from Altona East. His assistant is Paul Harris, a former player of the year and last season assistant at Thomastown.

The Vojtek signing will be decided by the VSF Tribunal. Miles confirmed the transfer, but it later transpired a tribunal hearing next week will decide the transfer fee. While Heidelberg is believed to have offered $2000, St Albans demanded ten times as much.

Altona East finished third under Ollerton last season. Former Green Gully, Altona Magic and Melbourne Raiders coach Chris Taylor has taken over at the Phoenix.

Altona Magic coach Marjan Trajcevski has been replaced with Jim Bikicki, who coached Heidelberg more than five years ago in the NSL.

The Magic has signed new faces such as Jeremie Mbog Nyetam, from Cameroon, Orhan Katovic, who played in Yugoslavia, and local player Lou Domovski. It also scored goal keeper Michael Lilikakis, who played at Port and South Melbourne.

"We'll take nothing for granted," Bikicki said. "We've had a reasonably good pre-season and we'll try and win what we possibly can."

Bentleigh Greens were runners-up to Green Gully and coach Gary Cole, who won premierships with Altona Magic and Bulleen, will have his goal set on lifting the trophy this season. Greens major signing is the return of striker Juan Nilo from NSL club Eastern Pride in Morwell.

Bulleen's coach Joe Mullen will have his first full season, since coming over from South Australia and taking over from Alan Davidson last season after seven matches.

Damien Vojtek: Last season's player of the year moves to Heidelberg from St Albans.

The Zebras signed Will Hastie from Bentleigh Greens, veteran striker Brian MacNicol from Eastern Pride and former Melbourne Knights midfielder Lance Plunkett from Thomastown.

"We'd be extremely disappointed if we didn't make the top five," Mullen said. "Our objective is first to make the finals and then to try and win the title."

South Dandenong has changed its name to Dandenong Thunder. Dandenong returns to the VPL after a season's absence, promoted as champion of State League division one last season.

It has the legendary Bobby McLachlan as coach. A former Eastern Pride coach, McLachlan also coached Fawkner and served on the Victoria Institute of Sport coaching staff. He was an Olyroos liaison officer during the Aussie Olympic Games.

Essendon Royals enter the VPL for the first time in the club's 40-odd year history. The Royals already have an experienced team, including three-times Victorian player of year George Jolevski. It has recruited Adrian Guzzupe, a former Joey, Green Gully and South Melbourne player, as well as Steve Tribuzio from Doncaster Rovers.

The club's priority is to stay in the premier league and finish away from the relegation zone.

"This is our first season in the VPL in the club's 43-year history," Essendon coach Michael Giacomi said. "We won't be the fancies team, but we'll do the job every week and want to be a bit of a surprise packet," he said.

Fawkner has been in the VPL since 1982 and is yet to win a title. The Blues were runners-up to Bulleen in 1993. Former NSL coach at the Melbourne Knights and Melbourne Zebras, Ken Murphy is taking the reins for the fourth season. Captain Tony Schipano is entering his 28th year at Fawkner, starting as a junior.

The Blues have recruited a Perth midfielder Joel Vaz and lost striker Peter Psarros to Port Melbourne and Eric Vasiliadis to Heidelberg. Veteran and Knights legends Joe Biskic and Ivan Duzel will again tie their boots in midfield.

"We'll try and get in the top five. We lost two good players, but we'll try and make up for it," Fawkner president Santo Rizza said.

Port Melbourne appointed former Bentleigh Greens coach Harry Chalkitis in a major signing, which also prompted some serious recruiting.

The Sharks have signed 'keeper Steve Wardle from Sunshine, Peter Psarros from Fawkner, Arthur Tsirtsakis who has returned from Greece, Mitchell Pino from Bentleigh Greens and an Iranian refugee Rahim Musawy, who will be groomed to be stopper.

Port has lost Dusko and Sasha Nikolic as well as Nic Vukavajlovic to Fitzroy City, while Adam Koze and Tom Sonsini are training at Essendon.

"We're aiming to finish in the top five and then we'll see what happens," Chalkitis said.

Preston Lions have signed George Slifkas and Nick Cuculevski, both from Thomastown Zebras, as well as John Angelovski and Steve Nedanovski from Altona Magic.

The club has lost striker Ice Kutlesovski, who has returned to Green Gully, defender Zoran Drogriski, who has gone overseas, and Peter Stojcevski, who "is taking a break" from soccer.

The St Albans Saints will start a full season under Peter Crocker, who took over from Mike Petersen with seven games left last season, when Petersen went to coach his former NSL club South Melbourne, currently leading the NSL.

The Saints did not make a major signing. Reserves striker Tony Kelic, brother of former Melbourne Knights striker Ivan, is making his debut in the seniors. Another up-and-coming star is 16-year-old Damir Borkovic as a promising striker.

The Saints are hopeful to have Ivan Razov return from the Melbourne Knights. Matthew Urlovic has left the Saints and has returned to New Zealand, where his brother Paul plays for NSL club Football Kingz. St Albans lost Vojtek to the Bergers.

"We're looking at a spot in the finals. But a lot can happen in a season. We'll just have to play it by ear," Crocker said.

It seems to be the mood of most coaches at the start of another arduous season.

Ian Dobson: Coach of defending champions Green Gully.

Australia's only female FA Cup Winner

By Janene Mar

It had been some weekend for NSW midfielder Taryn Rockall back in mid-December.

Still reeling from the honour of being named Julie Dolan Medal winner as WNSL player of the year, 23-year-old Rockall continued the early Christmas celebrations when later that evening she received the phone call to advise she was amongst the final 18-member Matildas Team to contest the Australia Cup.

The previous night it was the excitement, the pressure and the atmosphere of a big crowd as the NSW Sapphires took on Queensland Sting in their attempt to become the first back to back national league champions. Then the disappointment as the title slipped from their grasp after Rockall herself broke through in a one-on-one with the keeper in the search for a stoppage time equaliser but was denied the shot and claims of a penalty were waved away. A resultant shin injury added to the pain.

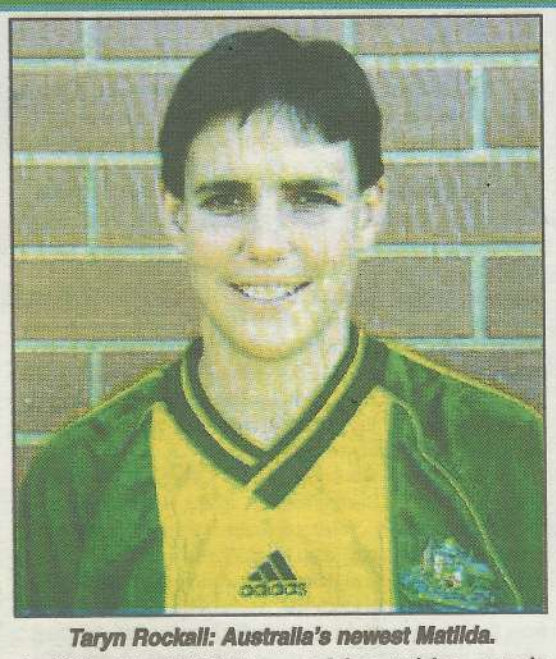
Rockall's first Matildas selection now obviously made everything worthwhile for the Sydneysider."Obviously joy, it's something I've been trying to do for a while," said Rockall of her feelings upon hearing the news from Interim National Coach Adrian Santrac. "But also there was the doubt that my injury would be alright. Once I'd received the all-clear, I was quite happy."

Rockall says being told of her inclusion in the 24-member Interim Squad earlier in the month was more of a surprise as she hadn't expected anyone to be named until after the grandfinal.

"I'd hoped to make the team. I'd really put the effort in at training, but at the end of the day, it's the National Coach's choice. My family were pleased I had a good summer series, so they were over the moon as well. It made Christmas a more special time, we were able to enjoy it more."

The playmaking central midfielder had impressively led the largely young Sapphires team, controlling play from the engine-room in confident style. Rockall made things happen in attack, her vision and distribution setting up countless opportunities on goal. Her ease on the ball extended to making solo raids on goal when the opportunity arose, although not shirking her defensive duties.

In addition, Rockall frequently added her name to the scoresheet, a strikerate which saw her also lift the title of WNSL Top Goalscorer with six goals from the five-round season.



Taryn Rockall: Australia's newest Matilda.

"I was very shocked," was Rockall's description on being named Julie Dolan Medal winner. "There are a lot of quality players in the WNSL, so to be chosen above a lot of them is quite an honour."

Now for the Australia Cup, Rockall stood alongside those same 'quality players', herself now one of the Matildas. The week-long training camp in Coffs Harbour leading into the matches against France proved less of a hurdle than might have been the case for a newcomer.

"It was a bit different for me, but it was a whole new thing for all the team. Being under a new coach, we all started more or less on the same level. But apart from that, we all clicked and got on pretty well."

Rockall went on to notch up her first caps, coming on as a second-half substitute in the first two matches. Super cool and calm, the rookie looked well at ease as she took to the centre of the pitch marking her first full international.

The lack of nerves was illustrated perfectly two minutes into Rockall's appearance, as she took off on her own, comfortably waltzed past two French opponents, before slipping a top class through ball, only for the play to be ruled offside.

"I'd played with a lot of the girls, not at international level, but at Under 19s or State, and it was easy to adjust knowing their style of play and what they do. I really only had to worry about what France would do. I think I handled it quite well. It wasn't as big a scare as I thought it was going to be. It was great to go out there and do a few little good things in my first international, knowing how daunting it can be for some people."

"Obviously to represent your country is a big highlight, and to say I've played my first cap, and on a winning side, as we went on to win the Cup which was pretty huge."

But there is another significant chapter to Rockall's soccer career not so well known here in Australia. The midfielder is the only Aussie female to have won an FA Cup final in England, having achieved that feat before a crowd of around 8,000 with club Arsenal Ladies where she spent eight months from September 1998. Billed as the season highlight along a similar vein as the men's Cup final, Rockall played her part in defeating Southampton before a huge crowd of around 8,000 at Charlton's stadium The Valley.

During that one season, in addition to the Cup, Rockall helped Arsenal to the League Cup crown and a second-place finish in the national Premier League.

The midfielder had decided on England to provide something different at a time when she felt in need of a change, and to experience the different style in a new country. She had the benefit of living with family once there.

Rockall considers the standard of the 10-team English league on a par with here in Australia, although she notes that they are now making steady improvement with the establishment of the part FA-funded Academy program.

"They're really starting to pick up each year and really starting to improve. They were pretty much starting this up when I was there, but now nearly every club has a junior Centre of Excellence. In 2002 or 2003, they're hoping to turn it into a professional league.

Back here, Rockall had been on the fringes for some time, having previously played in the Australian Under 21 Team in a single youth international against the USA back in 1997.

Rockall was also involved in numerous training camps with the OAP/Train-On Squad in 1997-98, plus Squads at Under 19 and Under 16 level, although unfortunately at times when no actual matches were played.

Away from soccer, Rockall keeps busy running her own home maintenance business, being a carpenter by trade.

It was a five-year-old Rockall that first took up soccer, quickly bored after being dragged along to watch her brother play.

Now she has broken through into the Matildas ranks, Rockall obviously now has ambitions to go on and further represent her country. It's just the start of a budding international career.

"The next World Cup and the Olympics is my ultimate goal. But at the moment it's to try and perform at a consistent level to stay in the squad. I might have played my first matches, but I can't slacken off now. I have to keep up the intensity to stay there. Now I want to work that bit harder on the areas I need to. The job is never finished."

Oceania Champions At Marconi Stadium

MARCONI STALLIONS

By John Economos

NEWLY crowned Oceania Champions, the Wollongong Wolves, will be on the prowl this Saturday night when they come up to Sydney to take on Marconi at the Marconi Stadium.

Royce Brownlie: Marconi's striker in action.

Marconi last Saturday night again won away, this time against the Canberra Cosmos who they defeated 1-2 at the Bruce Stadium. To date Marconi has lost just one away match out of eight away outings.

Marconi's twin-strikers, Royce Brownlie and Kris Trajanovski each scored first half goals that ultimately laid the foundations to Marconi's win.

Outstanding left wingback, Brendan Renaud, stated to ABSW last night: "We're all looking forward to our clash with Wollongong on Saturday night. We had a valuable away win last Saturday against Canberra in very hot conditions, even though it was a night game.

"Wollongong is a real exciting team as all of them love to attack.

"My duel with their skipper Matthew Horsley down the left could be interesting.

"Now that Wollongong has been recently crowned as the new Champions of Oceania, it will make things that much more interesting on Saturday night.

"I feel that Wollongong are a credit to themselves. Their performances have been outstanding, before and after, their crusade to Port Moresby for the Oceania Tournament," Renaud praised.

"But getting back to Marconi, this match is most important for us as Wollongong is a team from the 'Top Six'. It's a quality team that will give us quality opposition.

"Wollongong are no pretenders to retain their current title as League champions.

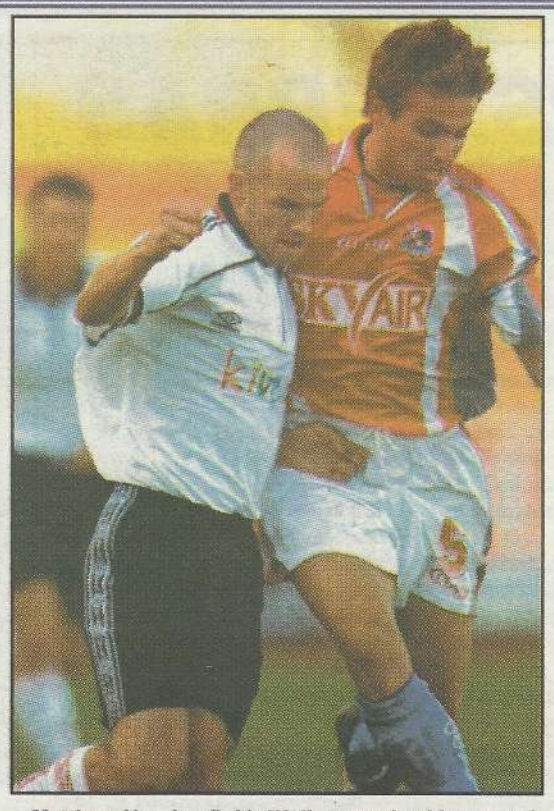
"We just can't get complacent at all, especially now that we are into the second Round of the League," warned Renaud.

Meanwhile Wollongong's Head coach Ronnie Corry, last night stated to ABSW: "We will still have Dino Mennillo out with suspension, but thankfully we'll have striker Saso Petrovski back from the injured list.

"With having a bye last week-end my players should be much fresher. I also eased back on training plus gave them the week-end off," Corry said.

The former Australian World Cup goalkeeper went on to say: "Marconi is a very difficult team especially if their striker Archie Thompson comes back from Europe this week. Anyhow if he's back he's back, if he's not, he's not. I just worry about Wollongong and what my boys do.

"We did very well in the Oceania Tournament but now we must stand up and do well in the National League," Corry concluded.



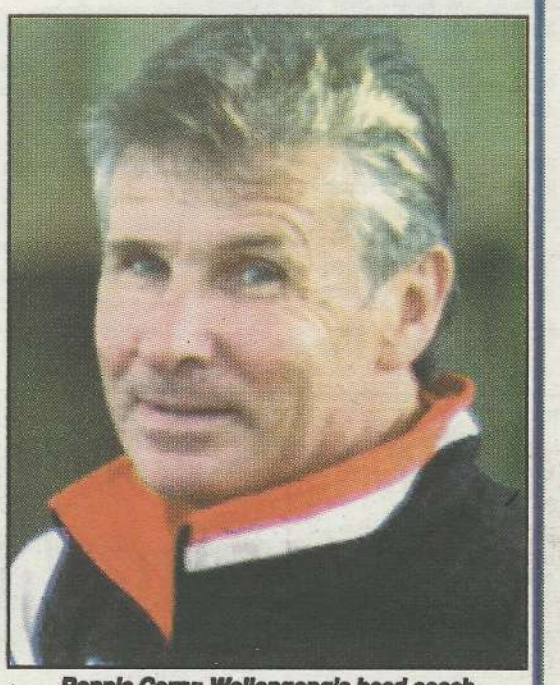
Matthew Horsley (left): Wollongong's skipper and right wingback.

Since their return to Australia from New Guinea two weeks ago where the Wolves heroically won seven out of seven games over a gruelling 13 day period to take out the Oceania Championship and thus qualify for the World Club Finals in July, Ron Corry's team four days later backed up for a most credible 1-1 draw against the powerful Perth Glory.

In 17 outings Marconi 's attack has scored 27 goals, four less than Wollongong who have played two games less due to their commitments last month in the Oceania Tournament in New Guinea.

Marconi's task will be how to contain Wollongong's three pronged attack in Saso Petrovski, Stuart Young and lethal left footer, Scott Chipperfield.

These three scored between them a massive 26 goals in the recent Oceania tournament at Port Moresby in just seven games that included the Final.



Ronnie Corry: Wollongong's head coach.

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Brendan Renaud: Marconi's brilliant left wingback.

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Victorian Premier League

ROUND 1

PORT WHIPS ZEBRAS

PORT MELB 4
BULEEN 2

By Bert van Bedaf

Port Melbourne opened its campaign with a resounding 4-2 victory at home against Bulleen last Friday night.

Two strikes by new signing Peter Psarros from Fawkner and two great saves by new 'keeper Steve Wardle from Sunshine helped secure Port's win.

Bulleen fought back after falling 4-0 behind with a full-on attack in the last 35 minutes.

But as Zebras coach Joe Mullen later observed, "You can't give anybody in the league a four-goal advantage and expect to catch up to them."

Port coach Harry Chalkitis admitted his side had been out-maneuvred in the second half, which almost cost them the game.

"At 4-0 we looked good, up to then, but Bulleen threw players forward and that disorganised us," Chalkitis said. "We gave the ascendancy to the opposition. Prior to that we didn't allow them to play."

The Sharks were without Arthur Tsirtsakis and Iranian U20 international Rahim Musawy, whose clearances had not yet come through.

They took the lead in the 22nd minute and continued to apply pressure on the Zebras defence. Psarros scored his first goal for his new club from close range, well inside the box.

Sam Poutakidis cut the ball back from the goal line and Psarros struck the net past several Bulleen defenders and 'keeper Jamie Cooper.

The Sharks looked sharp from the kick-off and extended their lead just on half-time. Former player-coach Peter Tsolakis took a free-kick a metre outside the box on the left and when Bulleen only half-cleared, Port vice-captain pounced on the right with a powerful drive from 20 metres that struck the net at the far post.

Evergreen Tsolakis, who played national league with South Melbourne, again proved his control of midfield with a clever though-ball to Psarros, who struck a second time for Port's third goal.

The Sharks knocked in their fourth goal on the hour with an individual effort from Nick Tsaltas, who eluded several Bulleen defenders before hitting the net.

Bulleen hit back two minutes later to keep in touch. Damien Guglielmi started the move with a pass to Will Hastie. The Zebras midfielder crossed to former Socceroo Waren Spink, who pegged a goal back with a shot from inside the box.

Bulleen gave the Sharks a double scare with a second goal in the 70th minute, when Berkam Sakaci found the net from a Sava Rusmir cross. Wardle denied Spink to inflict further damage, palming his header for a corner six minutes from full-time.

Wardle prevented a possible draw with a second major save a minute into injury time, denying Paul Della Rocca's header with another diving push over the bar.

BERGERS MARCH TO TOP

HEIDELBERG 3
PRESTON 0

By George Koukeris

Heidelberg United hit the top the league with a solid 3-0 victory over arch rivals Preston Lions at Olympic Village last Sunday.

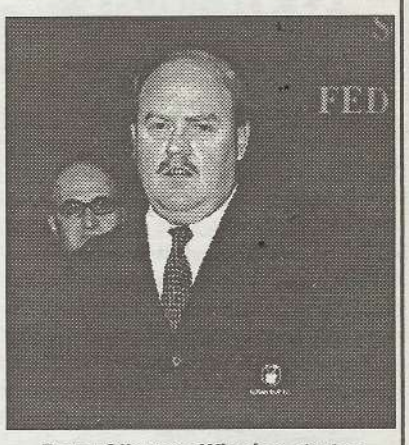
Bergers gun striker Alfonz Opazo hammered in a hat-trick. It indicates new coach Peter Ollerton's outfit is ready to stand to the challenge. Starting with Lazarevski on the bench, the Bergers moved for the kill from the outset.

Heidelberg moved swiftly into attack with Opazo leading the charge. An Opportunist's opportunity was clinically put away after a Preston defensive miss-call in the 22nd minute.

The Lions had their chance late in the first half to produce an equalizer. Pushing the Bergers into defence, a string of corner crosses almost delivered the goods for Preston.

In the second half, Heidelberg needed to kill the game early and in the 59th minute Opazo worked mechanically with Cameron Brown and George Georgiadis and move like lightning through the Lions midfield for what was certain to be a strike on target.

Preston's George Slifkas had other intentions and pulled down Opazo inside the box and recklessly conceded a penalty for another blow to the start of the Lions 2001 campaign.



Peter Ollerton: Winning start as coach of Heidelberg.

Converting the spot kick was another spectacle as Lions keeper George Tsianakis read the shot well and managed to get a hand to it, only for the ball to rebound off the crossbar and ricochet back to Opazo, who held his nerve for the conversion on the rebound.

The Lions struggled to find the key in Kamer Simsek and Dimce Panev, who both walked off the pitch with poor performances.

The Lions looked unorganized and were truly out of the contest in the 84th minute when Opazo again seized upon a defensive error to seal the match for the Bergers.

HOT OPENING ROUND GETS CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY

By Bert van Bedaf

Soaring heat on Friday and Saturday prompted referees to hold drink breaks at the Essendon and Port Melbourne matches.

Referees Hakan Anaz (Epping Stadium) and Jim Ouliaris (Anderson Reserve) allowed two-minute breaks halfway during each half, giving players some respite from the 30-plus temperatures.

But nature wasn't the only heat scorching the grounds. Heidelberg and Green Gully have shown their cards with solid victories.

Port Melbourne and Altona East also scored wins in their vital opening encounters, while Bentleigh Greens was held to a 1-1 draw at home to Fawkner and newcomers Essendon and Dandenong also earned a point each.

The Phoenix undid Altona Magic 2-1, while Port trounced Bulleen, 4-2. Zebras coach Joe Mullen described it as "a shocking start".

Preston shared that fate, having gone down 3-0 to the Bergers. Finding themselves at the foot of the ladder, it's a cold place for the Lions to be on what was such a hot day.

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Heidelberg United	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**3**	**0**	**3**
Port Melb. Sharks	1	1	0	0	4	2	3
Altona East Phoenix	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Green Gully Cavaliers	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Essendon Royals	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Bentleigh Greens	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Fawkner Blues	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Dandenong Thunder	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
St. Albans Saints	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Altona Magic	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Bulleen Zebras	1	0	0	1	2	4	0
Preston Lions	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Victorian Premier League

ROUND 2

SATURDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY

Altona Magic vs Bentleigh Greens — Paisley Reserve
U21: 5.00pm • First Grade: 7.00pm

South Dandenong vs Altona East Phnx — George Andrew Reserve
U21: 4.00pm • First Grade: 6.00pm

SUNDAY 11TH FEBRUARY

Fawkner Blues vs Port Melb Sharks — C.B. Smith Reserve
U21: 4.00pm • First Grade: 6.00pm

Green Gully Cav vs Heidelberg Utd — Green Gully Reserve
U21: 5.00pm • First Grade: 7.00pm

Preston Lions vs Essendon — B.T. Connor Reserve
U21: 4.00pm • First Grade: 6.00pm

MONDAY 12TH FEBRUARY

Bulleen Zebras vs St Albans Saints — Veneto Club
U21: 6.15pm • First Grade: 8.15pm

For more information, log onto www.soccervictoria.org.au

ROYALS SHARE DANDYS THUNDER

By John Rigas

In the clash between newly promoted teams Essendon and Dandenong, the Royals came from behind near the end to draw 1-1 with the newly named Dandy Thunder.

Both teams missed experienced players. Essendon missed experienced defender Tom Markovski and Dandenong was without star duo David Grella and Idriz Pelja.

Thunder's newly signed striker Boris Ovcin (ex-South Melbourne youth team) gave his team a dream start in the 15th minute. Pouncing on a poor clearance, Ovcin's blistering kick from 20 metres gave Royals 'keeper Mark Di Giaocchino no chance.

Dandenong featured other new signings in Bill Tsiakos (ex-Port Melbourne), Costa Caimakanis and George Lenetis (both ex-Bulleen). With VPL experience, the trio added bite to Thunder's line-up.

Dandenong got close to a second goal before the break. Play-maker Fikret Korkaris worked a one-two with Ovcin. But Di Giaocchino saved Korkaris's shot.

Essendon should have levelled just on half-time after Matthew Collina swooped on a defensive error. But the Thunder back-line recovered to clear.

Essendon equalised two minutes from full-time. Inside the area, captain Robert Spence struck the corner of the net, sending his relieved team mates and band of supporters into jubilation.

Round 1 Results

FRIDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2001
Port Melbourne Sharks 4 (Peter Psarros 2, Nick Tsaltas, Richard Watson
Bulleen Zebras 2 (Warren Spink, Berkan Sakaci)

SATURDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2001
Essendon Royals 1 (Robert Spence)
Dandenong Thunder 1 (Boris Ovcin)

SUNDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2001
Heidelberg United 3 (Alfonso Opazo 3)
Preston Lions 0

Altona East Phoenix 2 (John Dimitrelos 2)
Altona Magic 1 (Danny Madarovski)

Bentleigh Greens 1 (Paul Byrne)
Fawkner Blues 1 (Frank Tramontana)

St Albans Saints 1 (Zoran Tudor)
Green Gully Cavaliers 2 (Ice Kutlesovski 2)

Reserves

Port Melb Sharks	0	Bulleen Zebras	2
Essendon Royals	0	Dandenong Thunder	1
Heidelberg United	1	Preston Lions	0
Altona East Phoenix	1	Altona Magic	1
Bentleigh Greens	4	Fawkner Blues	2
St Albans Saints	2	Green Gully Cavaliers	2

Round 2 Fixtures
Saturday 10 February 2001
Altona Magic v Bentleigh Greens
Dandenong Thunder v Altona East Phoenix
Sunday 11 February 2001
Fawkner Blues v Port Melbourne Sharks
Green Gully Cavaliers v Heidelberg United
Preston Lions v Essendon Royals
Monday 12 February 2001
Bulleen Zebras v St Albans Saints

NSW Premier League

ROUND 12

There's no stopping Demons

Blacktown City Demons	**5**
Belconnen	**1**

The Belconnen Blue Devils were behind the eight ball even before the kick-off against the record breaking Blacktown City Demons last Saturday evening at Gabbie Stadium.

With Steve Lazzari, Geoff Howarth, Matt Julliene and George Cattanach all missing from their line-up, the team from the capital were always going to find the going tough against the reigning premiers.

While Matt Cachia and Scott Mason made a good fist of it in the heart of the Belconnen defence, they eventually succumbed to Brian Brown's well-drilled outfit.

Despite losing Steve Riches to dehydration at half-time, City adapted to the sweltering weather conditions far better than their visitors and it came as no surprise when defender Paul Yates opened their scoring in the 22nd minute. Yates soared to head home Paul Dee's free-kick.

Blacktown repeated the feat in the 34th minute when Jason Connolly nodded the ball from eight metres out from another Dee free-kick. A third soon came via the boot of Josh Maguire, a well taken volley off a Ben Willard cross.

To their credit Belconnen persevered against their more illustrious opponents but were restricted to long range efforts, rarely troubling 'keeper John Crawley.

The Blacktown defence was finally penetrated in the 78th minute when substitute Leo Langane made inroads on the left before finding Scott Manson on the edge of the penalty area. Mason turned and curled the ball inside the right upright leaving Crawley with very little chance.

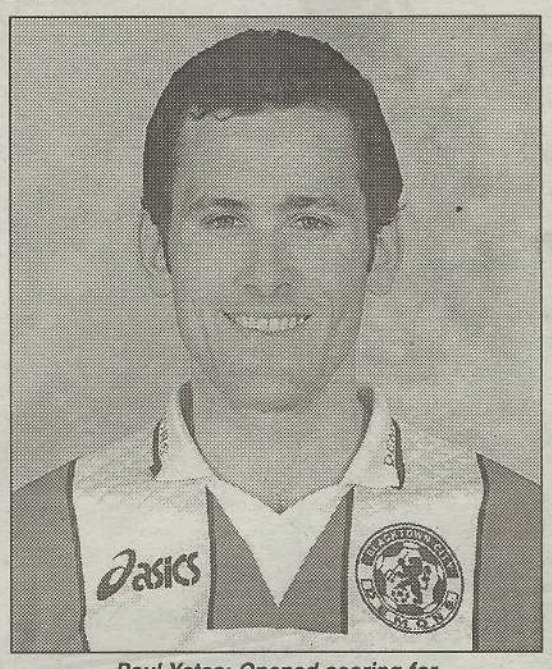
Blacktown ruined any hope of a comeback only two minutes later through Robert Angievski before Darren Iocca sealed the victory two minutes before the final whistle.

City now enjoy a seven point lead at the top of the Super League table.

Teams: BLACKTOWN CITY DEMONS: Crawley, Riches (Angievski 46), Foxe, Yates (Gatt 81), Willard, Connolly, Aschner (Racker 72), Dee, Langan, Maguire, Iocca.

BELCONNEN: Giannasca, Manson, Cachia, Mauro (Langane 59), Zamora, Rupil, Jankins, Schroder (Peitrukowski 87), Rakic, Gagetti, Unwin.

Josh Maguire: Entered the scoresheet for Blacktown.



Paul Yates: Opened scoring for Blacktown Demons.

Darren Iocca: Sealed victory for Blacktown.

• RESULTS •

ROUND 12

Bonnyrigg (Mancino 30)	1	**Canterbury M'ville** (Amegashie 37)	1
Sutherland	0	**Penrith** (Meilak 59)	1
Leichhardt Tigers (Stubbs-Mills 17, La Rocca 56 pen)	2	**Central Coast** (Hutchinson 27, 43, Williams 68)	3
Blacktown City (Yates 22, Connolly 35, Maguire 55, Angievski 79, Iocca 86)	5	**Belconnen** (Manson 77)	1
Parramatta Eagles (Kukucka 6, Bazdaric 31, Anderson 78, 82)	4	**St George**	0

• TOP SCORERS •

AFTER ROUND 12

Player	Club	Goals
Darren Iocca	BLACKTOWN	13
Steve Lazzari	BELCONNEN	11
Javier Mancino	BONNYRIGG W.E.	7
Adam Anderson	PARRAMATTA EAGLES	7

NSW PREMIER LEAGUE LADDER

(AFTER ROUND 12)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Blacktown City	12	10	2	0	34	12	32
Parramatta Eagles	12	8	1	3	29	20	25
Bonnyrigg	12	6	4	2	29	15	22
Central Coast	12	6	0	6	15	15	18
C'bury-M'ville	12	5	2	5	18	18	17
Leichhardt	12	5	1	6	25	23	16
Belconnen	12	5	1	6	23	24	16
St George	12	5	1	6	16	22	16
Penrith	12	1	2	9	9	30	5
Sutherland	12	0	4	8	8	27	4

For further information see: www.nswpremierleague.com

WRAP-UP

C'bury M'ville 1 Bonnyrigg 1

A gutsy Canterbury-Marrackville outfit held out for a 1-1 draw against Bonnyrigg at Henson Park- Berries 'keeper Jose Bello-Amigo saving a penalty with twenty minutes remaining to clinch an important point for the home side.

Played out under inclement weather, Bonnyrigg took the lead on the half-hour mark with captain Javier Mancino burying his seventh goal of the season from wide on the right.

Canterbury-Marrickville then tied the match up when on — loan Sydney Olympic striker Andy Amegashie scored his second in four appearances. He simply had to tap the ball in after a mix up in the Bonnyrigg defence between 'keeper Fernando Greco and James Warburton left the ball bobbling in front of an open net.

Sutherland 0 Penrith 1

Sutherland and Penrith produced a scrappy affair as both teams showed their desperation for a first win of the season.

The game, which was littered with fouls, offsides and multiple cards of both colours, was a stop-start affair in which a single goal always looked to be enough to get all three points — and so it proved.

Penrith's winner came from a near post tap-in from the boot of Glenn Meliak after NSW U/20 representative Tim O'Connell pulled the ball back from the byline.

Despite both teams losing a player to red cards within ten minutes of each other — Alen Stajcic for Sutherland and Jason Sciberras for Penrith — the goal came in the brief period that the Panthers were at a one-man advantage.

Leichhardt 2 Central Coast 3

Central Coast hung on to all three points in a desperate clash with the Leichhardt Tigers at Lambert Park, which will go a long way in determining who clinches the fourth finals place.

The opportunistic finishing from Coast striker Rod Hutchinson saw him grab a brace before half-time, to turn around a one-goal deficit thanks to an early goal from Tigers midfielder James Stubbs-Mills.

Hutchinson went on to supply the cross for the winner from Mick Williams, after which the Coasties stoutly defended their lead in the face of a Tigers attacking onslaught.

Parramatta 4 St George 0

The Parramatta Eagles bounced back in the best possible way after last week's drubbing at Blacktown City, defeating St George 4-0 at Melita Stadium.

After the 6-3 defeat by the Demons, it was important that the Eagles got off to a good start, and they did with a first goal by on-loan Parramatta Power striker Daniel Kukucka after just six minutes.

Just after the half-hour mark Tom Bazdaric made it 2-0, and a late brace from substitute Adam Anderson sealed the win that leaves Parramatta Eagles three points clear of Bonnyrigg in second place.

NSW Premier League

www.nswpremierleague.com

ROUND 13

SATURDAY 10 FEBRUARY

St George Saints v Belconnen	ST GEORGE STADIUM
Under 19s: 4.30pm	*First Grade: 6.30pm*
Central Coast v Parramatta	PLUIM PARK
Bonnyrigg W.E. v Leichhardt	SERBIAN CENTRE
Penrith v Canterbury M'ville	ANDREWS ROAD PARK
Blacktown City v Sutherland	GABBIE STADIUM
Under 19s: 5.00pm	*First Grade: 7.00pm*

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GRANT LAST: THE 'KIT KAT' KID

By Mark Stavroulakis

Twenty-year-old Grant Last is one of Australia's exciting youngsters in the National League.

Currently playing his football at Marconi, 'Lasty' has had much success in his so far short career in football.

As a youngster, Grant was always keen on making soccer his number one priority. Spending his first two seasons in the U13's and U14's at Kuringah, it was there people first noticed his enormous talent as a football player.

Shortly after that, he joined Blacktown in the U15's until finally settling in at Melita where he finished off his youth career in the U16's.

"I really had a great time while I was young playing for a couple of clubs. It was good seeing new faces and having new coaches show their own techniques.

After Melita I made the NSW ITC squad under the tutelage of Kelly Cross. I stayed there for around 6 months and then joined the AIS," said Last.

It was his presence in the State team of NSW at the National Identification Tournaments that caught the eye of the AIS coach Steve O'Connor.

"I played both U15's and U16's for NSW, winning both times which was a huge thrill.

After the U16's tournament in Parklea, coach of the AIS, Steve O'Connor selected me to be apart of his AIS squad,"said the young gun.

The AIS has boasted big names in the past like Brett Emerton, Mark Viduka and Ergic to name a few, but it's the intense training programs involved that make the AIS, the best youth developing side in Australia. 'Spending two seasons at the AIS was the best experience ever.

Having world-class facilities, doctors, dietitians, all were at our doorsteps. Training practically everyday, weights two times a week, prepared us players for the future as professional soccer players. Playing alongside the likes of Ergic, Milicevic, Ferrante, Wilkshire and Turnbull to name a few, was a great experience, as all the boys were of top quality. In my two years at the AIS, winning back-to-back Youth League titles was a huge honor for myself. Coaching-wise was also something I will never forget as I regard 'Rocks' (Steve O'Connor) as one of the best coaches in Australia," said Grant.

It was in January last year, that Last was approached by two National League clubs.

"Northern Spirit and Marconi had contacted me after my scholarship had finished at the AIS. After many discussions I decided to sign for the Stallions as it is one of the biggest clubs in Australia and also a club that offer opportunities,"said the former AIS graduate.

Grant Last: "I really want to play in England."

'Lasty' signed a 18-month contract with Marconi, and hopes that by the end of his time at Marconi, an overseas offer would beckon.

The tough midfielder made his debut with the club in last year's semi-final match against Carlton, which Grant will never forget. "It was a huge buzz playing in a semi-final for my debut. I had come on as a substitute and after just 13 minutes I was shown the red card for a bad tackle on Steve Horvat. We ended up losing the match and it was a memory that I'd like to forget," said the unlucky star.

The new year has started well for Grant, having played three National League games, and also being one of the standouts in the Youth side. "I played against Adelaide City, Auckland and Northern Spirit and thought I'd done really well. Playing in the Youth team regularly allows me to display my skills so I can maybe get more chances in playing for the first team of Marconi," said the number 27.

Grant's ambition this year is to try and cement a spot in the Marconi line-up and to do well in the U20's Australian squad. "Right now I'm really putting my head down for the up and coming qualifiers in the Cook Islands for the U20's side. We leave on Monday and are gone for a month, all should be a great experience.

Getting picked for the squad was a huge honor and one that I'm very happy about. We have a great squad and its going to be tough getting into the side, but this is where I will do all that I can to secure a first team spot in the Australian squad," said the Australian U20 star.

Although no offers or trials have yet to come Grant's way overseas, the young star is hopeful that after this season a trial in England is possible.

"I'd really love to play in England one day, as it's a league that best suits my style. Hopefully with the U20's this year, making the World Cup in Argentina will further my chances in playing professionally overseas," said the young international.

Apart from his soccer career, Grant has also risen to fame on the Television screen as well, being apart of a Kit Kat commercial a couple of years ago, hence his nickname 'The Kit Kat Kid'. "While I was at the AIS, the company sponsoring us, Nestle, asked if anyone could star in a commercial for Kit Kat. I thought it would be a good opportunity to do something different, I really had a lot of fun," said the up and coming television star.

With plenty years ahead of Grant's career left, time will only tell whether his dream of playing overseas turns into a reality.

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE

SOUTHERN DIVISION - RD 15

LEADING SCORERS

Name	Team	Goals
Steve Manceski	South Melbourne	18
Nick Waite	Peninsula Blues	12
Denis Mustac	Eastern Pride	11
Brett Cunningham	Fawkner Blues	9
Viktor Memeti	South Dandenong	9
Daniel Debevc	Carlton	8
Arif El Dib	South Melb Acad	8

LEAGUE LADDER

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Eastern Pride	14	11	1	2	47	11	34
Sth Melbourne	12	10	0	2	66	18	30
Melbourne Knights	13	10	0	3	41	16	30
VIS	15	8	2	5	31	25	26
Peninsula Blues	12	8	0	4	35	16	24
Sth Melb Acad	11	6	1	4	23	20	19
Melb Knights Acad	13	6	0	7	21	24	18
South Dandenong	11	5	2	4	18	17	17
Green Gully Cavaliers	13	3	3	7	14	26	12
Albury Wodonga	13	3	2	8	14	34	11
Bulleen Zebras	14	2	4	8	20	36	10
Fawkner Blues	13	3	1	9	20	42	10
Preston Lions	12	0	0	12	9	71	0

By Roy Hay

Melb Knights Academy 0 Green Gully Cavaliers 1

A single goal by Imran Balla gave Green Gully Cavaliers its victory over the Melbourne Knights Academy on Friday at Knights Stadium.

The goal came four minutes into the second half to enliven what had been a fairly ordinary game. There were two red cards. For the Academy Ante Cirjak and Haris Vrbovac were the top performers.

Eastern Pride 0 VIS 0

In the only other Round 15 match played this week-end, Eastern Pride and the VIS played a scoreless draw at Mobil Stadium. Defences were on top and when the forwards did break through there was always someone on the line to clear.

Full back Rob Ashby was the Pride's hero, putting in a series of good tackles and seeming to have a magnet which attracted everything in the air.

For the VIS, keeper Fred Au was outstanding once again and some of his saves took the breath away. The hot conditions took their toll, but there was no lack of effort, only goals were missing.

Peninsula Blues v Fawkner Blues

Match not played.

Preston Lions v South Dandenong

Match not played. Soccer Australia's decisions on these matches will be included in next week's results and ladder.

South Melbourne v South Melbourne Eagles Academy is being played on Monday at Bob Jane Stadium at 7 pm.

Bulleen Zebras v Melbourne Knights, will be played at the Veneto Club at 4 pm on 4 March 2001.

ROUND 15 RESULTS

Friday 2 February 2001
Peninsula Blues v Fawkner Blues
(Match not played)
Melbourne Knights Academy 0
Green Gully Cavaliers 1
(Imran Balla)

Saturday 3 February 2001
Eastern Pride 0 VIS 0
Preston Lions v South Dandenong
(Match not played)

Monday 5 February 2001
South Melbourne v Sth Melbourne Eagles Academy
(Bob Jane Stadium, 7 pm)
Albury Wodonga v Bye

Sunday 4 March 2001
Bulleen Zebras v Melbourne Knights
(Veneto Club, 4 pm)

Wednesday 7 February 2001
South Melbourne Eagles Academy v Sth Melbourne
(Bob Jane Stadium, 7.00 pm)

ROUND 16 FIXTURES

Saturday 10 February 2001
Preston Lions v Bulleen Zebras
(BT Connor Reserve, 4 pm)

Green Gully Cavaliers v Eastern Pride
(Green Gully Reserve, 5 pm)

Sunday 11 February 2001
Melbourne Knights v Peninsula Blues
(Knights Stadium, 4.00 pm)

Albury-Wodonga v Melb Knights Academy
(Greenfield Park, 4.00 pm)

South Dandenong v VIS
(George Andrews Reserve, 4.00 pm)

South Melbourne v Bye
South Melbourne Eagles Acad v Bye
Fawkner Blues v Bye

BRAZILIAN EX-INTERNATIONAL BAIANO FAILS DOPE TEST

Former Brazil World Cup defender Junior Baiano has tested positive for cocaine, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) has said.

A CBF official said the 30-year-old Baiano, who was ever-present for Brazil at the 1998 World Cup in France but has not played for his country since, failed a dope test following the final of Brazil's Joao Havelange Cup between Vasco da Gama and Sao Caetano two weeks ago.

The player, who has suffered disciplinary problems throughout his career, has been given an automatic 30-day suspension but faces a disciplinary tribunal and could eventually be banned for up to one year, the CBF said.

Vasco directors said they had not been officially informed of the test result.

"If it's true, we will take the necessary measures," said Paulo Reis. "But we have not yet been told officially."

Vasco won the match, the replayed second leg of the final, 3-1 to take the title 4-2 on aggregate.

The replay was ordered at one week's notice after the original game in December was abandoned in the 21st minute when a fence collapsed at Vasco's Sao Januario stadium, injuring some 150 people.

The decision to play the match came in the middle of what should have been the players' annual holidays and gave them only a few days to prepare for the game.

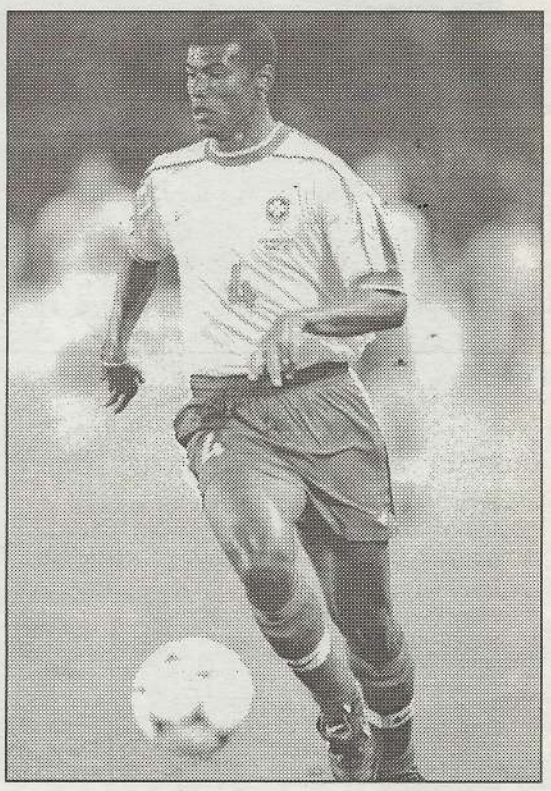
Baiano, who was once sacked by German club Werder Bremen for punching an opponent and earning a 10-match ban as a result, joined Vasco at the start of last year from fellow Brazilians Palmeiras.

He has been sent off three times since then, on one occasion for fighting with opponents during a goal celebration by his team. Two of the red cards came last month.

He is famed for being an erratic player, capable of looking stylish and classy one minute and producing a horrendous blunder the next.

Although he played in every match in France, Baiano, whose full name is Raimundo Ferreira Ramos Junior, often looked shaky and after his return home was greeted with chants of "Junior Baiano sank Brazil" by rival fans during Palmeiras' matches.

The 3-0 World Cup final defeat against France was the last of his 24 full international caps.



Junior Baiano: Caught with hard drugs.

DE LA PENA'S KIDNAPPER ARRESTED

A 35-year-old man has been arrested in connection with the attempted kidnap of Barcelona player Ivan de la Pena, Catalan regional police has said.

The man, who had recently escaped from an open prison in the Barcelona area, shot and injured a policeman as he tried to avoid arrest after his car was involved in a collision in Castelldefels, some 16 km (nine miles) from Barcelona.

Spanish international De la Pena, 24, had earlier alerted police that a vehicle containing two men had followed him after training on Monday.

The player managed to get away and supplied the police with the registration plate of the vehicle, wich turned out to have been stolen last week.

Earlier last month Catalan regional police detained a 50-year-old businessman who admitted he was planning to kidnap a Barcelona player, to demand a ransom to cover his business debts.

The vice-president of Barcelona, Joan Castells, said that he was alarmed by the two cases that have come to light in the last month.

"The club has to be very alert to the dangers of this sort," he said. "There is a great deal of organised criminal activity going on at the moment and we will have to take this into account in the future."

De la Pena, who broke into the Barcelona team under the guidance of Johan Cruyff in 1995, rejoined the Catalan club on loan from Italian club Lazio at the beginning of this season.

MONACO LOSES POINTS OVER FAKE PASSPORT SCAM

Pablo Contreras: Source of Monaco's troubles.

French champions Monaco were docked two points last week for fielding a player who allegedly used a false European passport.

Chilean international defender Pablo Contreras, who has since been loaned to Argentine side Racing Club, was suspended for four months with two months of the ban suspended.

French league (LNF) disciplinary committee chairman Jean-Pierre Camus said Monaco had suffered the loss of points because of their "lack of vigilance" in the matter.

St Etienne were docked seven points earlier this month for using players with fake European passports. Their appeal against that decision will be heard this week. Monaco are also free to appeal Tuesday's decision.

Contreras returned to Europe earlier last week to defend himself against allegations that he had been using a fake Italian passport.

He was immediately taken into police custody in Monaco and then taken before an investigating magistrate and charged with "fake use and inappropriate delivery of an official document".

He was released on bail to attend Tuesday's hearing with Monaco president Jean-Louis Campora.

St Etienne were docked seven points after Ukraine international goalkeeper Maxim Levitzky and Brazilian striker Alex were found to be using false passports.

If the penalty stands, Monaco will be only four points above the relegation zone.

Metz, also due to face the disciplinary committee on Tuesday night, were granted a postponement because their Colombian goalkeeper Farid Mondragon -- the player whose passport is in question -- is on international duty.

Mondragon will face court in March charged with having used a fake Greek passport.

JUVENTUS' TREZEGUET DOWN WITH INJURY

Juventus's French international striker David Trezeguet will be out for a month with a hamstring injury, the Italian club has said.

"The player is suffering from a pulled hamstring. He will have to rest for a full eight days and will not be back in action for a month," said club doctor Riccardo Agricola.

Trezeguet, who has scored seven goals in his first season in Serie A, underwent tests last week after he picked up a hamstring injury during penultiomate Sunday's 4-0 win over Vicenza.

The Frenchman's misfortune could leave the way open for a recall for Alessandro Del Piero, who has been out of favour since returning from injury earlier this month.

Juve coach Carlo Ancelotti has the option of Del Piero or Yugoslav striker Darko Kovacevic as a replacement for Trezeguet.

Juventus are currently second in Serie A, three points behind leaders AS Roma and face fourth placed Atalanta on Saturday.

David Trezeguet: Sidelined by injury.

NANTES, ST. ETIENNE IN LEAGUE CUP Q-FINALS

Nantes and St Etienne scored contrasting victories last week to seal their places in the last eight of the French League Cup.

First division high-flyers Nantes needed a penalty shootout before triumphing away to third division Valence while St Etienne cruised to a 2-0 home win over AJ Auxerre.

Nantes and Valence were 0-0 after regulation time and 1-1 after 30 minutes of extra time before Nantes finally won through 4-2 on penalties. Substitute Marama Vahirua scored a superb solo goal to lift Nantes 1-0 ahead six minutes into the first period of extra time but defender Benjamin Fabra gave Valence a dramatic lifeline with a header in the dying seconds of extra time.

Nantes goalkeeper Mickael Landreau then became his team's match-winner, making diving saves to halt spot kicks from Fabra, who went from hero to villain in seconds, and Christiansen Gauthier.

Vahirua's goal earlier looked to have been enough to see Nantes through. The Tahiti-born striker juggled the ball on the edge of the area before chipping it over helpless goalkeeper Fabrice Bruneau from 18 metres out.

JAPAN WANTS WORLD CUP TITLE CHANGED

Japan is fighting for a change in the title name of the 2002 World Cup finals because FIFA put South Korea ahead of them when they announced the joint Asian co-hosts in April 1996.

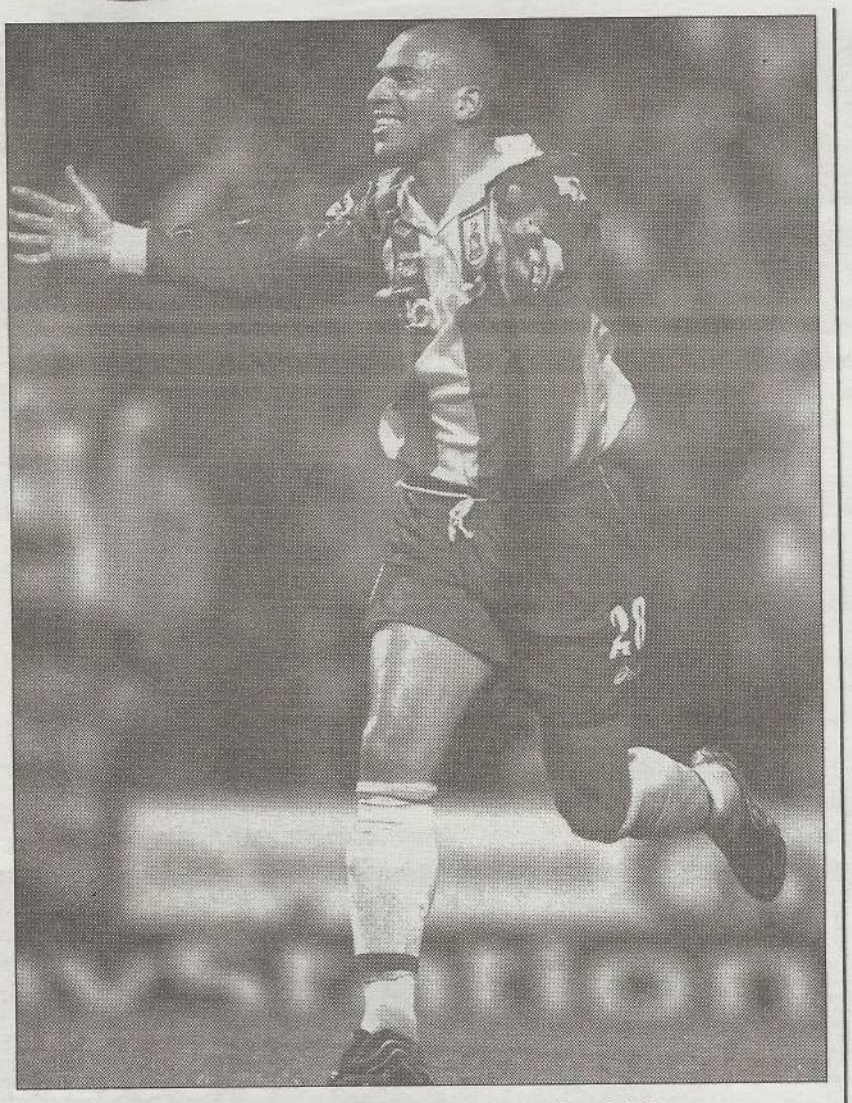
World governing body FIFA's general-secretary Michel Zen-Ruffinen said he hoped he had found a solution. Zen-Ruffinen said his idea — believed to be a suggestion that Japan's name be put first in the Japanese language — was being considered by the Japanese and a decision would be made in due course.

Officially, the next finals tournament will be called 2002 FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan following a decision taken by world soccer's governing body in 1996.

But Zen-Ruffinen said he understood Japan's feelings of disappointment which were discussed during a six-hour meeting in Cannes on Monday with the general secretaries of the Korean and Japanese organising committees.

Japan had hoped to be the sole hosts of the World Cup finals and were upset, at first, when it was announced that they would be co-hosting with South Korea.

WORLD



Stan Collymore: Now to feature in the Spanish liga.

ITALIAN PLAYERS INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTE RING

Several top Italian soccer players are linked to a police investigation into a high-class prostitution ring operating on the Internet, Milan police has said.

.The police declined to name the players or their clubs, but a spokesman said players from a well-known side had been spotted with expensive call girls who advertised on websites.

"These girls charge between a million and three million lire ($500 to $1,500), so you are talking about clients of a certain standing," Filippo Ninni, who led the investigation as head of

Milan police unit responsible for tracking down Internet crime, said.

"The footballers called some of the girls seen on the website and met up for dinner, and then some of them left together afterwards. Under Italian law neither they nor the girls did anything wrong, but we are going after those who profit from such activities," Ninni told Reuters.

Two men in their 40s were released on bail after police raided the headquarters of Internet site www.metropolitan it in Cesena, northern Italy, and seized computer servers.

Ninni said the two men were suspected of using the website to promote and benefit from prostitution.

The website, containing pictures of women along with their phone numbers, addresses and prices, has since been closed down.

Serie A club Inter Milan, one of Europe's leading soccer teams, denied allegations in some Italian news reports that they were involved in the police investigation.

Inter said in a statement they had conducted an internal investigation covering all their players and denied any connection between any of them and those involved in the inquiry.

Police issued a statement clarifying that they had not named any players or clubs. "We only said that players of a well-known squad were involved. We have absolutely not given neither the name of the team nor the names of the players," the statement said.

The Milan cybercrime unit says it is now investigating other similar Internet sites. The unit is cooperating with U.S. and European police.

COLLYMORE FINALLY JOINS OVIEDO

English striker Stan Collymore was finally presented to the media by his new club Real Oviedo after two days of negotiations and an equally protracted journey to the northern Spanish city.

The 30-year-old player has joined Oviedo on a 1-1/2 year contract after a free transfer from premier league Bradford City.

Collymore was due to arrive in Oviedo on Tuesday, but the fine print of his new contract took longer to complete than was originally envisaged and he missed his scheduled flight from Madrid.

The player did take a flight on Wednesday morning, but it was forced to return to Madrid after it was unable to land in the fog-hit Oviedo airport.

Collymore finally made a four-hour journey by car, giving him just enough time for his medical and presentation in front of close to 1,500 fans at the club's new stadium.

"It is really good to be here, in a club like this, after so much negotiating," the player told reporters. "I have come to Oviedo to improve as a player."

Collymore said he was in a good state of fitness and was ready to play in the club's league match against Las Palmas on Sunday.

Oviedo coach Radomir Antic, who has made it clear that the player's controversial past does not worry him, said his new recruit would significantly strengthen his squad.

"Collymore is an exceptional player. With him Oviedo are going to be more ambitious and the young players will have the opportunity to learn things from him."

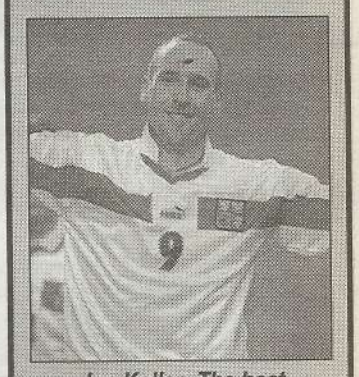
Oviedo are in 13th position in the Spanish first division with 27 points from 20 matches.

KOLLER IS BELGIAN PLAYER OF 2000

Anderlecht's Czech striker Jan Koller won Belgium's Player-of-the-Year award for 2000 at a televised ceremony in Ostend last week, Wednesday.

Koller won the coveted "Golden Boot" title ahead of team mates Yves Vanderhaeghe and third-placed Walter Baseggio.

The award is voted by Belgian media and soccer personalities. A first vote is taken in June, with a second round in December.



Jan Koller: The best of Begium.

Paul Van Himst of Anderlecht holds the record for winning the title four times, in 1960, 1961, 1965 and 1974.

Two players, Jan Ceulemans of Club Bruges (1980, 1985 and 1986) and Wilfried Van Moer (1966, 1969 and 1970), playing for Antwerp and Standard Liege, won the trophy three times.

The previous 10 winners are:

1999 — Lorenzo Staelens (Anderlecht)
1998 — Branko Strupar (Genk)
1997 — Per Zetterberg (Anderlecht)
1996 — Franky Van Der Elst (Club Bruges)
1995 — Paul Okon (Club Bruges)
1994 — Gilles De Bilde (Eendracht Aalst)
1993 — Per Zetterberg (Anderlecht)
1992 — Philippe Albert (Mechelen / Anderlecht)
1991 — Marc Degryse (Anderlecht)
1990 — Franky Van Der Elst (Club Bruges)

MONACO NO LONGER KEEN ON LEBOEUF

French international defender, Frank Leboeuf's planned move to Monaco is definitely off, Chelsea officials said last week.

Managing director Colin Hutchinson said before Chelsea's premier league match against Newcastle United that the deal was called off because the French league club had been unable to sell players to find room for Leboeuf in their squad.

"The deal was all agreed last week between the clubs and the player...but they said they had not managed to shift their players to make room for him," Hutchinson said.

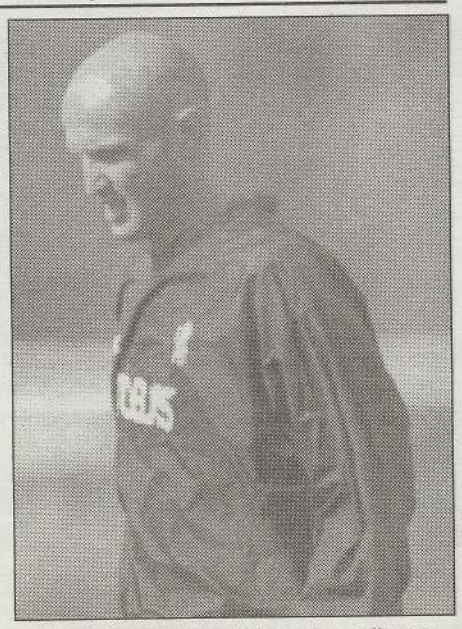
Chairman Ken Bates added: "We agreed terms for Frank's transfer some time ago and to put it bluntly Monaco can't come up with the money."

Chelsea sources said Monaco needed to sell players before Wednesday's deadline for transfers in order to afford Leboeuf and had not managed to.

Last week Leboeuf said he was sure he had played his last game for Chelsea and was on his way back to France after four and a half years with the London club.

But he played penultimate Sunday in the club's 4-2 FA Cup win over Gillingham and coach Claudio Ranieri included him in Wednesday's side against Newcastle.

Hutchinson said Leboeuf would now have to clear his head of thoughts of moving and concentrate on playing well at Stamford Bridge in order to win a regular place in the France side.



Frank Leboeuf: Now forced to adjust to life at Chelsea.

INTER STAR, RECOBA, IN PASSPORT SCAM

Alvaro Recoba (left): Under investigation by Italian police over passport irregularities.

Inter Milan's Uruguayan midfielder Alvaro Recoba is the latest Serie A player to be under investigation for passport irregularities.

Italian media reported that Recoba was interviewed at the offices of the prefect of Milan last week,after authorities investigating the false passports of Brazilian players at Udinese had contacted their colleagues in Milan.

The daily Gazzetta dello Sport said that Recoba's Italian passport is authentic but the investigation is focused on whether the Italian family origins he cited in his application for citizenship were genuine.

Recoba joined Inter in 1997 from Uruguayan club Nacional and was registered as a non-European Union (EU) player as he had only a Uruguayan passport.

The large number of non-EU players at Inter restricted Recoba's opportunities and he was loaned out to Venezia in 1999 but in September of that year he gained an Italian passport.

Inter issued a statement saying they had nothing to do with the investigation and had "total confidence in the good faith of the player".

Authorities in Udine have been investigating the Portuguese documents of Brazilian players Alberto and Warley.

The duo were stopped on entry to Poland in September ahead of a UEFA Cup tie against Ruch Chorzow, after Polish border officials said their passports were false.

Lazio's Argentine midfielder Juan Veron has also had his Italian citizenship documents investigated by Rome authorities.

There have been a series of investigations in France focused on players who have falsely gained EU citizenship, while in England Brazilian player Edu's transfer to Arsenal was delayed after he was refused entry to the country with a false Portuguese passport.

BREAKAWAY EURO LEAGUE GATHERS MOMENTUM

The possibility that many of Europe's top clubs could pull out of their domestic leagues and form a new northern European League could come a step closer to reality.

Peter Fossen, a director of PSV Eindhoven, told delegates at the Football Expo trade show that as many as 16 clubs could be involved in the project — also referred to as the Atlantic League.

"Whatever you like to call it, the feeling is growing that the big clubs in the smaller leagues can no longer guarantee their places in the Champions League or compete with the richer clubs from countries like England, Spain and Italy any longer," Fossen said.

"Not only are the best players moving away from the smaller countries but also the next-best players are leaving as well. I am not sure that any club from outside the Big Five leagues can win the Champions League in the foreseeable future. We just cannot compete any longer and this is why we have to change.

"We want to stay within a UEFA framework and believe we can make the new league work. However, the response from UEFA so far is negative.

"There has to be a change of mindset at UEFA. They have listened to the problem and say they understand it but they do not seem ready to want to listen to our solution."

The proposed league, which has attracted interest from 13 clubs so far but could be expanded to include at least three more, would be played on Saturdays and Sundays and begin in July 2002.

The interested clubs — Ajax Amsterdam, PSV Eindhoven and Feyenoord from the Netherlands; Rangers and Celtic from Scotland; Benfica and Sporting from Portugal; Anderlecht and Bruges from Belgium; IK Gothenburg and AIK Stockholm from Sweden and Brondby and FC Copenhagen from Denmark — are meeting in Amsterdam, soon.

Fossen stressed that they were not seeking to break away from UEFA but wanted to be a new integral part of the European soccer pyramid.

"These clubs have tradionally been, or have the potential to be, among the biggest clubs in Europe but because of their domestic leagues their commercial marketing prospects have sunk and they can no longer compete as equals with the likes of Manchester United or Juventus as they once did.

ZIDANE, BECKHAM, RIVALDO WANTED IN UAE

World player of the year Zinedine Zidane, David Beckham of England and Brazilian Rivaldo have been lined up as a possible replacement for Maradona in a testimonial game for a former United Arab Emirates skipper.

David Beckham

The 40-year-old Argentine 1986 World Cup winner was finally ruled out for the match for Abdul Rahman Mohammed on March 8 after a series of cancellations, Gulf News reported last week.

Instead, organisers have earmarked three of the world's leading players in Zidane, Beckham and Rivaldo as possible alternatives.

"We have received instructions not to continue our negotiations with Maradona," Mohammed Hamida, the event organiser, told Gulf News.

"It is now beyond us. There is no way that he will come to Dubai at our invitation or play in the March 8 testimonial for Abdul Rahman Mohammed.

"Instead we have received instructions to try to secure contracts for either England's David Beckham, Brazilian Rivaldo or France's Zinedine Zidane.

"We will commence the paperwork and do everything we can to get one of them over here," he added.

According to the newspaper, Maradona's manager Guillermo Coppola had made one last attempt to salvage his client's involvement in the event, for which the Argentine was due to be paid $250,000.

Rivaldo

"Diego still wants to come to your country," said Coppola. "It's a strange situation why this is not possible. He has rearranged his whole schedule only to be able to travel to Dubai and this is not possible. We ask, where did we go wrong, and why can't Diego come?

"Diego says he does not know what the reason is for all the confusion and hopes something can still be worked out. "I have been his manager and friend for the last 16 years and never before have we experienced a situation like this. It's very unusual and makes us very sad.

"Diego is not responsible for any of the mistakes and cancellations and wants to make it very clear that he was always willing and ready to come to Dubai.

"There were invitations from many European countries, but Diego turned them all down because he wanted to go to Dubai.

Zinedine Zidane

"This is a shameful way to treat somebody as famous as Diego," Coppola said.

WORLD

RUSSO WRITES

By Joe Russo

Two weeks ago this column highlighted the fact that some European players were not actually European. As we wait for FIFA and the European Union (EU) to come up with a solution to the soccer transfer problem, there is another case of a player with possibly a false passport.

Alvaro Recoba, Italy's highest paid player who plays for Inter, is under investigation from judges in Milan as to how he obtained his Italian passport.

In short, if you have a passport from an EU member country such as Italy, you are allowed to play football freely in those member countries. However, if you don't have an EU-country passport you may not be able to play for a European club because they are limited to a maximum of five non-EU players in their squad.

Obviously the better non-EU players will always have a place in competitions such as the Serie A but the fringe players may go to some length to obtain an EU-country passport.

Recoba is now a star but a few years ago, when he arrived in Italy from Uruguay, he was an unknown quantity. In other words, he was one of those fringe players who probably needed an Italian passport.

Inter had a surplus of strikers last season and lent him out to Venezia (then in the Serie A) where he scored regularly and really established himself. Upon viewing his excellent form Inter hastily recalled him to their squad and signed him up for a record-breaking contract. Recoba had well and truly established himself in Italy.

However, a dark cloud is hanging over his head and so too over the heads of many more players in Europe. The false passport market is one of the best businesses, it would seem, as they prey on young soccer players desperate for that EU passport.

Something has to be done about it. A solution that FIFA should look at is that players are only allowed to play under one passport. This passport would be the same one as the country they play for at international level. No dual passports should be allowed.

Players choose the country they play for at international level very carefully because they know that once you play for one country, you can never play for another one. It should be the same regarding transfers - never again should a player that plays for Uruguay or any other non-EU country (including Australia) be considered as an EU country player.

How can Recoba or anyone else in his situation be classified as Italian? I can't recall Recoba in the famous Azzurri shirt! Wake up FIFA before it is too late because currently the transfer system is one big rort.

●●●●

Arrigo Sacchi is no longer coach of Parma after three weeks. Three weeks ago this column concluded that Sacchi wasn't the right man for Parma, or any other club for that matter.

Sacchi's departure is unclear but it appears that stress is the cause. Two years ago when he left Atletico Madrid he said that he was tired of the profession and had enough.

Quite frankly everyone has had enough of Sacchi too. A total failure in his last three club stints - AC Milan (his second stint there in 1996), Atletico Madrid and now Parma. Not to mention his stint as Italian national coach. Let us hope that once and for all we have seen the last of Sacchi.

Replacing Sacchi at Parma will be Renzo Ulivieri, the former Bologna and Napoli coach. Ulivieri is not the type to let you down but it would appear to be a big promotion. He has virtually been plucked out of oblivion and given one of the prime jobs of the Serie A.

Parma is one of those clubs that does well but can never seem to win a Scudetto. Their list of failed coaches includes Nevio Scala, Carlo Ancelotti, Alberto Malesani and Sacchi.

Scala performed better than all because he had the task of converting Parma from a Serie B club to a successful Serie A outfit. He was their first coach in the Serie A in 1990.

Parma should look seriously at securing the services of someone like Marcello Lippi for next year. The former Juventus and Inter supremo knows what it takes to win a title and would be the ideal man for Parma.

ITALIAN SERIE A

BARI 1 BRESCIA 3

Belgian goalkeeper Jean-Francois Gillet saved two penalties but his side still lost to remain bottom.

Newly signed Albanian Igly Tare scored his first Serie A goal for Brescia before defender Rachid Neqrouz equalised for Bari with his opening goal of the season. Veteran striker Dario Hubner added two break-away goals to seal Brescia's win. Bari played virtually the entire match with 10 men after Giuseppe Mazzarelli was sent off for a last-man foul.

BOLOGNA 0 INTER MILAN 3

Inter's second away win of the season. Christian Vieri's fourth goal of the campaign gave them the lead before Luigi Di Biagio scored a beautiful diving header.

Vladimir Jugovic's perfectly-placed chip a minute later rounded out the scoring and handed Bologna their sixth loss.

LAZIO 3 LECCE 2

Lazio's fourth consecutive match under Dino Zoff. Hernan Crespo opened the scoring with a blast from inside the box.

Lecce equalised through Alessandro Conticchio before Crespo struck his second. Lazio's Juan Veron slotted home 10 minutes later and a Cristiano Lucarelli penalty late in the game rounded out the scoring. Crespo has now scored seven goals in his last four matches. Lazio joined Juventus in second place on 33 points.

Roma's Vicent Candela is "sandwiched" between two Parma players.

AC MILAN 1 REGGINA 0

AC Milan scored at the San Siro stadium for the 44th consecutive league match, equalling a club record from the 1950s. Brazilian midfielder Leonardo broke the deadlock with a well-taken strike in the 79th minute. Reggina remained second from bottom.

NAPOLI 1 FIORENTINA 0

Fabio Pecchia capitalised on a rare mistake by Fiorentina's Italy goalkeeper Francesco Toldo to score Napoli's last minute winner wich lifted them out of the relegation zone.

PARMA 1 AS ROMA 2

Leaders AS Roma won their sixth away match of the season.

Gabriel Batistuta scored both goals, giving him 13 for the season, equal with AC Milan's Andriy Shevchenko. A breakaway goal by Marco Di Vaio gave Parma the lead but a fine ball by AS

Roma defender Walter Samuel found Batistuta in space to slot

home a volley for the equaliser. Batistuta scored the winner seven minutes from time from an Aldair cross.

VICENZA 1 UDINESE 2

Udinese's third away win of the season. Martin Joergensen gave the visitors an early lead. Luca Toni scored from the penalty spot just before halftime for Vicenza.

In injury time, Udinese's Massimo Margiotta slotted home a Stefano Fiore cross for the winner.

PERUGIA 1 VERONA 0

Surprise package Perugia won their seventh match of the season.

Captain Marco Materazzi gave the Umbrian side their victory with a well-placed header in the 64th minute. Verona's defeat was their sixth away this season.

ATALANTA 2 JUVENTUS 1

Juventus lost their first away match of the year and saw their 12-game unbeaten run ended.

Atalanta defender Massimo Paganin's own goal gave them the lead but Atalanta equalised with a header from substitute Stefano Lorenzi. Nicola Ventola beat the offside trap to give Atalanta the win eight minutes from time.

AC Milan's Andrei Schevchenko being held back by a Reggina defender.

Bari	1	Brescia	3
Bologna	0	Inter Milan	3
Lazio	3	Lecce	2
AC Milan	1	Reggina	0
Parma	1	AS Roma	2
Vicenza	1	Udinese	2
Napoli	1	Fiorentina	0
Perugia	1	Verona	0
Atalanta	2	Juventus	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. AS Roma	17	12	3	2	33	13	39
2. Juventus	17	9	6	2	29	15	33
3. Lazio	17	10	3	4	33	20	33
4. Atalanta Bergamo	17	8	5	4	22	15	29
5. AC Milan	17	7	6	4	27	23	27
6. Fiorentina	17	6	7	4	30	24	25
7. Udinese	17	8	1	8	30	27	25
8. Perugia	17	7	4	6	23	20	25
9. Inter Milan	17	6	6	5	20	19	24
10. Bologna	17	7	3	7	19	20	24
11. Parma	17	6	5	6	20	18	23
12. Lecce	17	5	6	6	21	27	21
13. Brescia	17	3	8	6	19	22	17
14. Napoli	17	4	5	8	20	27	17
15. Vicenza	17	4	4	9	17	29	16
16. Verona	17	3	6	8	18	29	15
17. Reggina	17	4	1	12	12	30	13
18. Bari	17	3	3	11	14	28	12

WORLD

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

BRADFORD 0 ASTON VILLA 3

Villa had managed just one goal in their last five games but were comfortable winners against hapless Bradford who look certain to go down.

Darius Vassell opened the scoring five minutes after the break and then more poor defending allowed him to race clear for a second 10 minutes later.

Julian Joachim completed the well-deserved win three minutes from time.

COVENTRY 0 ARSENAL 1

Coventry produced a performance full of spirit and no little skill but still ended pointless for the fifth successive game.

They had much the better of the first half with John Eustace blazing the best of several chances over the bar.

Arsenal, who had scored only eight goals in their previous 12 away games were below their best but finally found a way through 12 minutes from time when Silvain Wiltord crossed from the left and Dennis Bergkamp glanced in a header.

DERBY COUNTY 1 SUNDERLAND 0

Craig Burley sidefooted in three minutes before halftime and then hit the post soon after as Derby earned a hugely important win.

Sunderland created several second half chances but it is now two successive defeats for Peter Reid's team.

IPSWICH TOWN 1 LEEDS UNITED 2

The end of a miserable week for Ipswich who have gone out of two cup competitions and now lost four in a row.

A Mark Venus own goal in the 28th minute put Leeds ahead and in-form Robbie Keane made it 2-0 from close range just before halftime.

Venus pulled one back with a 25 yard free kick in the 63rd minute but when striker Marcus Stewart was sent off for a bad tackle on Ian Harte 10 minutes later it was all over for the hosts.

Chelsea's Mario Melchiot climbs above Leicester's Dean Sturridge.

LEICESTER 2 CHELSEA 1

A Muzzy Izzet header from a great Steve Guppy cross after 24 minutes had Leicester ahead with Dennis Wise hitting the post for Chelsea.

Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink equalised with a 75th minute header only for Gary Rowett to restore Leicester's lead a minute later and leave Chelsea still searching for their first league away win of the season.

LIVERPOOL 3 WEST HAM 0

Liverpool turned on the style with a classy passing performance with Vladimir Smicer and Robbie Fowler ruling supreme.

Smicer blasted them ahead with a 25-metre shot after 20 minutes and Fowler, with a superb left-foot shot just before the break, made it two.

After 57 minutes another excellent Liverpool move left Fowler a tap-in for his second and only a marginal linesman's decision prevented a hat-trick after he put in yet another Smicer cross.

MAN. UTD 1 EVERTON 0

United, resting several first-choice players including Roy Keane, never got out of second gear but it was enough for another regulation win.

They lost Paul Scholes through injury at halftime but just when the home crowd were getting nervous Andy Cole linked well with Dwight Yorke before seeing his shot deflected in off defender Steve Watson for the only goal after 58 minutes.

M'BROUGH 1 MAN. CITY 1

Middlesbrough's unbeaten run continued but they would have wanted more from this relegation fixture.

City's Danny Tiatto had a brilliant early goal harshly ruled out for offside but they went ahead in the 28th minute when new signing Andrei Kanchelskis's cross was turned into his own net by Steve Vickers.

Colin Cooper scrambled in the equaliser after a 62nd minute corner though Terry Venables's side had to withstand a late City assault after having Keith O'Neill sent off five minutes from the end.

TOTTENHAM 0 CHARLTON 0

Tottenham completed their fourth successive 0-0 draw and were booed off by their own fans.

They have now failed to score in seven of their last eight games and rarely looked like ending that run in a poor game.

Arsenal's Dennis Bergkamp shoots at Coventry City defenders.

Bradford City	0	Aston Villa	3
Coventry City	0	Arsenal	1
Derby County	1	Sunderland	0
Ipswich Town	1	Leeds United	2
Leicester City	2	Chelsea	1
Liverpool	3	West Ham Utd.	0
Manchester Utd.	1	Everton	0
Middlesbrough	1	Man. City	1
Tottenham Hotspur	0	Charlton Ath	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Manchester United	26	19	5	2	58	16	62
2. Arsenal	26	13	8	5	42	23	47
3. Liverpool	25	13	5	7	46	27	44
4. Sunderland	26	12	7	7	31	24	43
5. Ipswich Town	25	12	4	9	37	32	40
6. Leicester City	25	11	6	8	26	27	39
7. Leeds United	25	11	5	9	37	33	38
8. Chelsea	25	10	7	8	47	32	37
9. Newcastle United	25	11	4	10	32	35	37
10. Charlton Athletic	26	10	7	9	34	38	37
11. Tottenham Hotspur	26	8	9	9	30	34	33
12. Aston Villa	24	8	8	8	27	26	32
13. Southampton	25	8	8	9	29	34	32
14. West Ham United	25	7	10	8	32	30	31
15. Everton	25	7	6	12	26	37	27
16. Derby County	26	6	9	11	27	43	27
17. Middlesbrough	26	5	11	10	30	33	26
18. Manchester City	26	5	8	13	30	45	23
19. Coventry City	26	5	6	15	23	45	21
20. Bradford City	25	3	7	15	16	46	16

MURPHY'S LAW

By Julian Murphy

The revolving door at Stamford Bridge has witnessed the coming's and going's of several players, managers, trainers and, more than likely, a fair few fans over the past couple of seasons.

This all as a result of Chelsea trying to convince themselves that they are serious challengers to Manchester United's dominance of the English Premier League.

However, over the past couple of weeks this same door has become jammed for a couple of players that have helped Chelsea to an unprecedented swag of trophies in recent years.

Dutch keeper and former Chelsea No.1, Ed de Goey, has seen a desired move to Belgian club Anderlecht come unstuck due to his high wage demands. Chelsea manager Claudio Ranieri has preferred young Italian Carlo Cudicini for much of the current campaign and the recent arrival of Manchester United outcast Mark Bosnich has convinced the Dutchman his future lies elsewhere.

Like de Goey, fellow jam-ee Frank Lebouef is having trouble escaping from the Bridge with a proposed move to Monaco collapsing last week. The outspoken French defender has incurred the not inconsiderable wrath of Chelsea fans after a string of inept displays and it appeared to be curtains a couple of weeks ago when he quipped, "I do not have a future here and it is time to move on."

Lebouef, Chelsea managing director Colin Hutchinson and, according to Frank, the manager of Monaco, all thought the World Cup winner was on his way to the struggling principality club for around $6.5 million. Yet, when the French transfer window closed on January 31, Lebouef was still at Chelsea even though he insisted he had agreed to personal terms with Monaco.

According to Lebouef, Monaco President Jean-Louis Campora was to blame when he opted to sign Argentine defender Christian Patino who is 12 years younger and, some experts would have believe, stacks better. Faced with turning out in front of fans who have made it clear that they would much prefer to see young Englishman (!) John Terry play, Frank moaned, "Jean-Louis Campora has treated me and Chelsea with total disrespect."

Young Terry might fancy his chances of keeping a dispirited Lebouef out of the Chelsea defence, but, as he is English, he won't be able to relax for long.

Chelsea have made inquiries as to the availability of another foreigner, Roma defender and Brazilian international, Cafu.

It is no secret that Chelsea's repeated forays into foreign transfer markets to achieve success has annoyed a lot of people. Manchester United player Gary Neville voiced the opinion of many last week when he said that his team's success had a lot to do with the fact that the core of the side were British and that their main challengers brought in too much foreign talent. "You need players from the country the league is in" said the defender who annoys about as many people as Chelsea.

This may be true Gary, but does it mean that United are actually any good? Not according to former United player Karel Poborsky. The Czech international recently joined Lazio from Benfica and believes that his new team 'has much more technical ability' than the Red Devils.

If Poborsky is right, expect to see him spend a lot of time sitting on the Lazio bench because that's about all he did at Old Trafford. Oh yeah, and Lazio shouldn't have a problem winning the European Cup like United did in 1999.

The Champions League is something that won't be bothering Chelsea for a while.

The dismal start to the season has seen to that but, before the defeat at Leicester on the weekend, Chelsea were experiencing a bit of a revival. Their previous defeat hadn't been since mid-December and they have snuck back into contention for a place in Europe. With the second most potent attack in the league, Chelsea are still alive in a Manchester United-less FA Cup and may yet add to their recent trophy haul.

Could it even be possible that Ranieri is actually piecing together a Chelsea side that could spoil Alex Ferguson's final year in charge at Old Trafford?

Unless Ranieri takes heed of the wise words of Gary Neville, it is still highly unlikely.

WORLD

FIFA World Rankings

(Valid until February 14)

1	Brazil	821	70	Zimbabwe	493	138=	L'burg	266
2	France	801	71	Macedonia FYR	488	140	Tanzania	262
3	Argentina	771	72=	Kuwait	483	141	Fiji	251
4=	Czech Republic	742	72=	Uzbekistan	483	142	Korea DPR	250
4=	Italy	742	74	Albania	480	143=	Ant. & Barbuda	244
6	Portugal	738	75	**AUSTRALIA**	479	143=	Grenada	244
7	Spain	734	76	China PR	478	145	Andorra	243
8	Netherlands	708	77=	Cuba	475	145	St Kitts & Nevis	243
9	Yugoslavia	707	77=	Togo	475	147	Liechtenstein	242
10	Paraguay	706	79	Bosnia-Her	472	148	Benin	239
11	Germany	705	80	Algeria	471	149	Sri Lanka	227
12	Mexico	691	82=	Iraq	471	150	Botswana	225
13	Romania	683	82=	Guinea	470	151	Bangladesh	223
14	Norway	675	83	El Salvador	460	152	Dominica	222
15	Colombia	671	84=	Haiti	459	153	Bermuda	219
16	United States	659	84=	Namibia		154	Gambia	216
17	England	657	86	Lithuania	457	154	Maldives	216
18	Croatia	655	87	Congo	455	156	Cape Verde Is.	210
19	South Africa	635	88	Senegal	454	157	Dominican Rep.	207
20	Russia	634	89	Liberia	448	158	Eritrea	196
21	Chile	629	90	New Zealand	443	159	Cayman Islands	194
22	Slovakia	626	91	Gabon	442	160	Yemen	190
23	Denmark	625	92	Armenia	441	161	Mauritania	189
24	Sweden	624	93	Latvia	438	162	Chinese Taipei	186
25	Scotland	612	94	Northern Ireland	437	163	Chad	174
26	Tunisia	611	95	Moldova	430	164	Surinam	173
27=	Belgium	610	96=	Belarus	427	165	Laos	171
27=	Morocco	610	96=	Indonesia	427	166	Nepal	166
29	Trin. & Tobago	600	98	Mali	424	167	Vanuatu	163
30	Egypt	599	99	Vietnam SR	420	168	San Marino	159
31	Turkey	598	100	Qatar	414	169	Cambodia	158
32	Ireland Republic	596	101=	Singapore	412	170	Cook Islands	157
33	Uruguay	590	101=	Syria	412	171	Palestine	152
34	Ukraine	587	103	Uganda	411	172	British Virgin Is.	144
35	Slovenia	586	104	Kenya	408	173	Samoa	140
36=	Cameroon	585	105	Barbados	407	174	Kyrgyzstan	137
36=	Iran	585	106	Jordan	401	175	Netherlands Ant	134
36=	Saudi Arabia	585	107	Oman	395	176	Central A Rep.	127
39	Poland	583	108	Malaysia	390	177	Guinea-Bissau	126
40	Japan	581	109	Wales	387	178	Bahamas	117
41=	Israel	578	110	Lebanon	383	179=	Macao	116
41=	Korea Republic	578	111	Venezuela	377	179=	Philippines	116
43	Greece	573	112	Madagascar	365	181	Sao Tome e Principe	115
44	Austria	572	113	Mozambique	363	182	Niger	107
45	Peru	560	114	Malawi	357	183	Guyana	105
46=	Honduras	557	115	Azerbaijan	349	184	Aruba	100
46=	Jamaica	557	116	Libya	348	185	Tonga	98
48	Hungary	556	117	Mauritius	344	186	Belize	93
49=	Zambia	555	118	Faroe Islands	335	187	E. Guinea	90
49=	Nigeria	555	119	Malta	325	188	Seychelles	83
51	Cote d' Ivoire	550	120	Kazakhstan	323	189	Djibouti	80
52	Iceland	545	121	Panama	319	190	Pakistan	73
53	Ecuador	543	122	India	315	191	Nicaragua	71
54	Bulgaria	540	123	Hong Kong	311	192	PNG	65
55=	Angola	539	124	Myanmar	308	193	Brunei DAR.	64
55=	Costa Rica	539	125	Burundi	306	194	Somalia	
57	Guatemala	532	126	Turkmenistan	305	195	Puerto Rico	52
58=	Ghana	531	127	St Vincent/Gr.	303	196	Anguilla	35
58=	Switzerland	531	128	Rwanda	300	196	Mongolia	35
60	Finland	529	129	Swaziland	295	198	US Virgin Is.	33
61	Thailand	521	130	Sierra Leone	291	199	Guam	29
62	Cyprus	520	131=	Lesotho	289	200	Turks & Caicos Islands	22
63	Canada	517	131=	Solomon Is	289	201	Bhutan	15
64	UAE	512	133	Tahiti	288	202	Montserrat	11
65	Bolivia	509	134	Sudan	284	203	Amer Samoa	8
66	Georgia	508	135	Ethiopia	282			
67=	Congo DR	499	136	Tajikistan	281			
67=	Estonia	499	137	St Lucia	275			
69	Burkina Faso	498	138=	Bahrain	266			

***Note:** Teams inactive since 1991 and teams which have not played yet do not appear in the table.*

WORLD RESULTS ...

FRENCH CHAMPIONNAT

NANTES DETHRONE LILLE AT THE TOP

Nantes regained first place in the French first division with a 1-0 home win against Paris St Germain on Saturday.

Olivier Monterrubio scored after 59 minutes, volleying home after Frederic da Rocha clipped the ball across the penalty area.

Nantes now have 43 points from 25 matches, two clear of Olympique Lyon, 3-2 winners at En Avant Guingamp thanks to a last-minute strike from Brazilian Sonny Anderson.

Nantes moved three points ahead of previous leaders Lille, who face local rivals RC Lens away on Sunday.

Sedan, 1-0 victors at Bastia, and Girondins Bordeaux, held 1-1 by struggling Toulouse, also total 40 points.

Bernard Lama: Could not prevent another defeat for PSG.

Nantes created several good first half chances, but were unable to find a way past PSG goalkeeper Lionel Letizi.

He made two fine stops to thwart Nicolas Gillet, the first from a free kick. He also saved at the feet of Monterrubio, while Frederic da Rocha missed when it seemed easier to score.

PSG, who used new signings Mauricio Pochettino, Didier Domi and Vampeta, played with renewed enthusiasm but Christian and Nicolas Anelka were profligate in front of goal.

Nantes coach Raynald Denouiex was equally pleased.

"I thought we were very solid and when you look at the match in its totality, it was a win we merited," he said.

Anderson's 100th and 101st French league goals proved decisive at Guingamp, where the hosts scored twice through Bruno Rodriguez and looked to have done enough to share the points.

Philippe Celdran's 45th minute effort saw Sedan home at Bastia and ended a dismal away run.

Bordeaux trailed to a Victor Bonilla penalty at Toulouse but equalised with a penalty of their own from Pedro Pauleta.

Champions Monaco returned to form with a 6-1 home win over relegation-haunted Metz. Ludovic Giuly and Marcelo Gallardo each scored twice.

St Etienne managed a late equaliser through Alex di Rocco to draw 3-3 at home to Strasbourg and AJ Auxerre won 1-0 at Olympique Marseille, with Pierre Deblock the scorer.

The Troyes-Stade Rennes game was postponed because of a waterlogged pitch.

RC Lens 0 Lille 1, Nantes 1 Paris St Germain 0, Troyes v Stade Rennes postponed, Olympique Marseille 0 AJ Auxerre 1, En Avant Guingamp 2 Olympique Lyon 3, St Etienne 3 Strasbourg 3, Monaco 6 Metz 1, Toulouse 1 Girondins Bordeaux 1, Bastia 0 Sedan 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Lille	**25**	**12**	**7**	**6**	**30**	**18**	**43**
2. Nantes	25	13	4	8	41	32	43
3. Lyon	25	10	11	4	35	22	41
4. Bordeaux	25	10	10	5	34	22	40
5. Sedan	25	11	7	7	32	24	40
6. Bastia	25	11	5	9	30	25	38
7. Guingamp	25	9	8	8	29	30	35
8. Troyes	24	9	8	7	30	32	35
9. AJ Auxerre	25	9	7	9	27	30	34
10. Rennes	24	9	6	9	27	24	33
11. PSG	25	9	6	10	32	33	33
12. Monaco	25	9	5	11	38	35	32
13. RC Lens	25	8	8	9	27	26	32
14. St Etienne	25	8	7	10	35	38	31
15. Marseille	25	8	4	13	24	32	28
16. Toulouse	25	5	9	11	25	33	24
17. Metz	25	5	9	11	19	33	24
18. Strasbourg	25	4	7	14	23	49	19

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

STUTTGART CRUSH KAISERSLAUTERN

Brazilian striker Adhemar, who joined during the winter break, and Romanian Ioan Viorel Ganea, led Stuttgart out of their problems by hitting three each.

Kaiserslautern looked lost and had to be content with a solitary first half goal — a deflected free kick from midfielder Mario Basler.

Brazilian Elber was the architect of Bayern's win, opening the scoring from close range after 13 minutes before sealing his side's victory with a header in the 59th.

Wolfsburg equalised when Polish striker Andrzej Juskowiak exploited a blunder by Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn in the 27th minute but Germany midfielder Mehmet Scholl put Bayern back in front just before halftime.

Georgian Levan Kobiaschwili scored the only goal from the penalty spot three minutes from time after Cologne defender Jens Keller brought down striker Regis Dorn in the box.

Thomas Hassler: His goal ensured Dortmund's defeat.

Romanian Vasile Miriuta opened the scoring for the home side from a free kick from some 20 metres after a few seconds.

Sebastian Helbig made it 2-0 three minutes before the break. Dane Ebbe Sand put Schalke back into the game with his 14th goal this season in the 54th minute but eight minutes later the visitors had midfielder Joerg Boehme sent off for elbowing Energie captain Christian Beeck.

Andrzej Kobylanski and Antun Labak then scored in quick succession for Cottbus to put the issue beyond doubt.

Former Bochum striker Kai Michalke, who came on for the injured Sebastian Deisler just before halftime, was instrumental in Hertha's first away victory against the Ruhr Valley club, scoring in the 66th minute and again just before time.

Michael Preetz had put the visitors in the lead after 32 minutes but bottom-placed Bochum equalised through midfielder Peter Peschel in the 62nd minute.

Peruvian Claudio Pizarro put Bremen in front from a free kick seconds from halftime. Czech Marek Heinz equalised from a Sergej Barbarez pass in the 56th minute, then hit the bar in the 62nd.

Brazilian Ailton put the home side back in the lead in the 71st minute before Pizarro made it 3-1 in the closing stages.

Former Dortmund player Thomas Hassler scored the only goal of the match from the penalty spot in the 53rd minute after fellow midfielder Daniel Bierofka was brought down in the box by Brazilian defender Evanilson.

SpVgg Unterhaching 1 Bayer Leverkusen 2, Hansa Rostock 0 Eintracht Frankfurt 2, VfL Wolfsburg 1 Bayern Munich 3, Cologne 0 SC Freiburg 1, Energie Cottbus 4 Schalke 04 1, VfL Bochum 1 Hertha Berlin 3, Werder Bremen 3 Hamburg SV 1, VfB Stuttgart 6 Kaiserslautern 1, TSV 1860 Munich 1 Borussia Dortmund 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Bayern Munich	**20**	**12**	**3**	**5**	**43**	**23**	**39**
2. Schalke 04	20	11	4	5	40	23	37
3. Leverkusen	20	11	4	5	34	22	37
4. Dortmund	20	11	3	6	31	26	36
5. Hertha Berlin	20	11	1	8	42	36	34
6. Kaiserslautern	20	9	4	7	27	29	31
7. SC Freiburg	20	8	6	6	28	21	30
8. Cologne	20	8	5	7	38	31	29
9. VfL Wolfsburg	20	7	7	6	37	27	28
10. Werder Bremen	20	7	6	7	28	30	27
11. 1860 Munich	20	7	6	7	25	33	27
12. Cottbus	20	7	2	11	26	35	23
13. Frankfurt	20	7	2	11	25	36	23
14. Hamburg SV	20	6	3	11	37	39	21
15. VfB Stuttgart	20	5	6	9	31	35	21
16. Unterhaching	20	5	6	9	20	31	21
17. Rostock	20	6	3	11	19	33	21
18. VfL Bochum	20	5	3	12	19	40	18

WORLD

WORLD RESULTS ... WORLD RESULTS ...

PORTUGESE PREMIER

BENFICA STRUGGLE AGAINST LEIRIA

Benfica made hard work of beating nine-man Uniao Leiria 3-2 at home last Sunday as they moved up to second place in the Portuguese premier league.

Uniao Leiria had striker Derley Silva sent off after 45 minutes for a second bookable offence and he was soon followed by defender Luis Bilro who was also shown the red card 10 minutes later.

Striker Joao Tomas gave Benfica a fifth minute lead after good work by Dutch teammate Pierre van Hooijdonk.

Eder Silveira equalised for the visitors before Benfica's new Brazilian midfielder Roger Flores made it 2-1.

Van Hooijdonk converted a 47th minute penalty to open up a two-goal cushion for the home team before defender Nuno Valente gave Uniao Leiria hope with a 30-metre shot in the 68th minute.

Uniao Leiria's nine men put Benfica under pressure in the closing stages but could not force an equaliser.

Brazilian substitute Jose Roberto scored twice in the space of eight second-half minutes to guide Braga to a 2-1 victory over Sporting.

Spanish midfielder Tonito Cruz had opened the scoring for Sporting in the 32nd minute with a header from a neat right-wing cross by Argentine Alberto Acosta.

Jose Roberto headed Braga level before grabbing the winning goal following a goalmouth scramble in the 62nd minute.

Meanwhile Boavista still head the table after a narrow win over last placed Estrela Amadora.

Benfica's Roger (right) fights for the ball with Leira's Cesar Tiago.

Farense 1 Gil Vicente 1, Benfica 3 Uniao Leiria 2, Belenenses 0 Beira-Mar 1, Campomaiorense 0 Aves 0, Maritimo 0 Salgueiros 1, Sporting 1 Braga 2, Vitoria Guimaraes 2 Alverca 2, Boavista 1 Estrela Amadora 0.

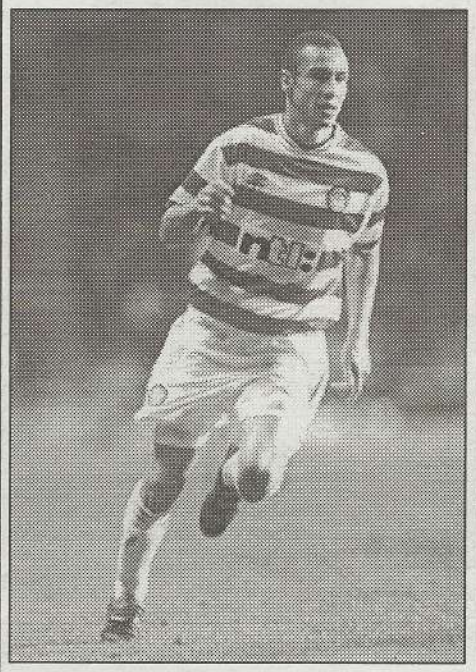
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Boavista	**20**	**13**	**6**	**1**	**39**	**12**	**45**
2. Benfica	20	12	4	4	37	20	40
3. Sporting	20	12	3	5	34	20	39
4. Porto	19	12	2	5	37	16	38
5. Braga	20	10	7	3	32	22	37
6. Belenenses	20	10	5	5	26	15	35
7. Salgueiros	20	9	2	9	21	29	29
8. Pacos Ferreira	19	7	7	5	25	17	28
9. Farense	20	7	7	6	25	26	28
10. Maritimo	20	7	5	8	20	20	26
11. Uniao Leiria	20	6	8	6	22	29	26
12. Beira Mar	20	6	5	9	22	30	23
13. Alverca	20	6	4	10	26	33	22
14. Guimaraes	20	4	7	9	23	32	19
15. Campomaiorense	20	3	9	8	15	30	18
16. Gil Vicente	20	3	5	12	13	27	14
17. Aves	20	2	6	12	18	39	12
18. Estrela Amadora	20	2	4	14	16	33	10

SCOTTISH PREMIER

LARSSON HAT-TRICK BREAKS HEARTS

Henrik Larsson showed that Celtic's winter break has not interrupted his prolific scoring with a hat-trick in the 3-0 win at Hearts over the weekend.

The Swedish striker extended his total for the season to 35 goals as Celtic regained their nine-point lead in the Scottish Premier League.



Henrik Larsson: Hat-trick hero.

Rangers had closed the gap by beating Dunfermline 2-0 but Martin O'Neill's side responded to the pressure and now go into next Sunday's 'old firm' derby at Parkhead brimming with confidence.

Celtic's first league match after the January shutdown brought a costly injury. as Joos Valgaeren was carried off with a suspected broken ankle and taken to hospital.

Larsson scored after four minutes when he rose to head home a free kick from Alan Thompson.

He made it 2-0 in the 68th minute with another set-up from Thompson, this time a low cross finished with the outside of his right foot from 14 metres.

Larsson sealed victory with a third goal on 83 minutes, finishing Didier Agathe's cross with a hook shot from close range.

It was his third hat-trick in five league outings — and earned the praise of his manager Martin O'Neil.

"Finishing is the most difficult art in the game, but Henrik makes it look ridiculously easy. He was fantastic tonight."

Hearts 0 Celtic 3, Aberdeen v Hibernian (postponed), Dundee United 1 St Johnstone 1, Kilmarnock 1 Motherwell 2, Rangers 2 Dunfermline Athletic 0, St Mirren 2 Dundee 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Celtic	25	21	3	1	69	21	66
2. Rangers	25	18	3	4	53	24	57
3. Hibernian	26	16	7	3	45	16	55
4. Kilmarnock	26	12	4	10	32	35	40
5. Hearts	27	10	6	11	38	40	36
6. Motherwell	26	9	5	12	33	40	32
7. St Johnstone	26	7	10	9	26	36	31
8. Dunfermline	26	8	7	11	23	33	31
9. Dundee	25	8	6	11	37	33	30
10. Aberdeen	24	4	9	11	24	40	21
11. St Mirren	26	4	3	19	17	50	15
12. Dundee Utd	26	3	5	18	20	49	14

PRIMERA LIGA

REAL WIN SEVEN GOAL THRILLER

Real Madrid restored their seven-point lead in the Spanish first division thanks to a pulsating 4-3 home victory over Malaga last Sunday.

Malaga signalled their attacking attentions from the start with strike combination Dario Silva and Dely Valdes a constant threat in the face of a rather passive Real defence.

Real Madrid's Raul (right) celebrates with Guti after scoring .

But it was Real who took the lead against the run of play. Guti, lurking among the Malaga defenders, latched on to a Roberto Carlos header and clipped the ball into the top corner with a well-timed shot.

Malaga continued to threaten and gained a deserved equaliser ten minutes later after a poor punch by Iker Casillas was headed over the Real keeper and into goal by Miguel Roteta.

Panamanian international Dely Valdes gave the visitors the lead on 30 minutes. Snapping up a pass from team mate Dario Silva, he sped around the advancing Casillas and struck home with his right.

The game ebbed and flowed as both teams exchanged attacks. But it was the Raul-Figo combination that provided the home side with two goals in three minutes.

The first came on 39 minutes when Raul got to a Figo cross ahead of former Real keeper Pedro Contreras and headed home.

Figo was the provider once more for Raul's second. The European Player of the Year spun another cross into the heart of the area and again Raul rose high to head home.

The second half was just as entertaining. Real had the better of the possession, but Malaga levelled with a superb headed goal in the 74th minute to Dario SIlva.

But Real showed character as they restored their lead within two minutes to clinch victory.

Meanwhile, Valencia drop 12 points behind Real after they were held to a 2-2 draw at Real Mallorca.

Hector Cuper's side lost concentration and allowed Alberto Luque to sneak in at the far post to level the match in injury time after they had taken a 2-1 lead in the second half.

Deportivo La Coruna keep up the pressure narrowly beating bottom club Racing Santander 2-1 and Barcelona went on a rampage defeating Athletic Bilbao 7-0.

Deportivo Coruna 2 Racing Santander 1, Las Palmas 1 Real Oviedo 0, Numancia 0 Valladolid 0, Osasuna 1 Espanyol 3, Real Madrid 4 Malaga 3, Real Mallorca 2 Valencia 2, Real Sociedad 2 Celta Vigo 2, Real Zaragoza 6 Rayo Vallecano 1, Villarreal 2 Alaves 0, Barcelona 7 Athletic Bilbao 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Real Madrid	21	15	3	3	51	24	48
2. Deportivo	21	12	5	4	38	21	41
3. Barcelona	21	12	4	5	46	27	40
4. Valencia	21	10	6	5	31	16	36
5. Villarreal	21	9	5	7	26	22	32
6. Mallorca	21	8	8	5	30	29	32
7. Las Palmas	21	9	4	8	24	36	31
8. Espanyol	21	9	3	9	29	24	30
9. Vallecano	21	7	8	6	39	35	29
10. Malaga	21	8	4	9	33	33	28
11. Alaves	21	8	3	10	30	29	27
12. Zaragoza	21	6	9	6	30	29	27
13. Bilbao	21	7	6	8	29	34	27
14. Real Oviedo	21	8	3	10	26	34	27
15. Valladolid	21	5	11	5	24	25	26
16. Celta Vigo	21	6	6	9	25	32	24
17. Numancia	21	5	5	11	20	33	20
18. Real Sociedad	21	4	6	11	23	42	18
19. Osasuna	21	3	8	10	21	33	17
20. Racing	21	3	5	13	22	39	14

WORLD LEAGUES

ENGLISH FIRST DIVISION

Fulham 1 Sheffield United 1, Birmingham 2 Norwich 1, Blackburn 0 Barnsley 0, Crewe 4 Burnley 2, Crystal Palace 2 West Bromwich 2, Grimsby v Wimbledon (postponed), Huddersfield 1 Nottingham Forest 1, Portsmouth 0 Preston 1, Queens Park Rangers 1 Bolton 1, Sheffield Wednesday 2 Watford 3, Stockport 1 Tranmere 1, Wolverhampton 1 Gillingham 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Fulham	**30**	**22**	**5**	**3**	**68**	**22**	**71**
2. Bolton	30	18	7	5	50	24	61
3. Blackburn	29	16	8	5	45	28	56
4. WBA	30	16	6	8	41	34	54
5. Birmingham	28	16	5	7	40	28	53
6. Watford	29	16	4	9	52	40	52
7. Nott Forest	29	14	5	10	38	33	47
8. Sheffield United	30	12	8	10	32	30	44
9. Preston	29	13	5	11	36	39	44
10. Burnley	28	12	6	10	30	34	42
11. Wimbledon	28	10	8	10	42	33	38
12. Norwich	30	9	8	13	27	37	35
13. Wolverhampton	29	8	10	11	30	33	34
14. Portsmouth	30	7	13	10	30	35	34
15. Gillingham	29	7	12	10	38	40	33
16. Crystal Palace	29	8	9	12	43	46	33
17. Barnsley	30	8	7	15	30	41	31
18. Stockport	30	6	12	12	39	49	30
19. Grimsby	28	8	6	14	27	40	30
20. Crewe	28	8	4	16	26	39	28
21. Huddersfield	28	6	9	13	28	35	27
22. Tranmere	28	7	6	15	29	46	27
23. QPR	29	4	14	11	30	43	26
24. Sheff Wed	30	7	5	18	32	54	26

GREECE FIRST DIVISION

Kalamata 0 Xanthi 1, Ionikos 2 Ethnikos Asteras 1, Panathinaikos 0 Panionios 1, Panachaiki 1 Iraklis 2, PAOK Salonika 2 PAS Ioannina 3, Paniliakos 1 Aris 2, Olympiakos 5 OFI Crete 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Olympiakos	**17**	**14**	**2**	**1**	**55**	**14**	**44**
2. Panathinaikos	17	11	5	1	30	9	38
3. PAOK Salonika	17	9	5	3	45	28	32
4. AEK Athens	16	9	3	4	31	23	30
5. Iraklis	17	9	3	5	26	18	30
6. Ionikos	17	8	6	3	28	22	30
7. Aris Salonika	17	7	4	6	20	19	25
8. Xanthi	17	7	3	7	11	16	24
9. Ethnikos Asteras	17	6	3	8	20	31	21
10. Panionios	17	4	8	5	17	20	20
11. Paniliakos	17	3	6	8	13	24	15
12. Panachaiki	17	3	5	8	19	27	14
13. PAS Ioannina	17	3	4	10	23	35	13
14. Athinaikos	16	3	3	10	21	35	12
15. OFI Crete	17	2	5	10	17	33	11
16. Kalamata	17	1	7	9	21	37	10

DUTCH FIRST DIVISION

Vitesse Arnhem 2 NEC Nijmegen 2, AZ Alkmaar 0 Feyenoord 3, Fortuna Sittard 0 Graafschap Doetinchem 0, Groningen v Ajax Amsterdam (postponed), Sparta Rotterdam 0 PSV Eindhoven 1, RBC Roosendaal 0 RKC Waalwijk 3, Twente Enschede 3 Willem II Tilburg 1, Heerenveen v Utrecht (postponed).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Feyenoord	**20**	**16**	**1**	**3**	**46**	**17**	**49**
2. PSV Eindhoven	20	14	5	1	42	12	47
3. Vitesse Arnhem	20	11	5	4	40	31	38
4. Ajax Amsterdam	19	11	3	5	48	25	36
5. Roda JC	19	9	3	7	35	26	30
6. Waalwijk	19	8	6	5	22	16	30
7. Willem II	20	8	6	6	32	26	30
9. NEC Nijmegen	20	6	10	4	28	24	28
8. Utrecht	18	8	3	7	34	30	27
10. NAC Breda	19	8	3	8	28	32	27
11. Twente Enschede	19	6	6	7	31	34	24
11. AZ Alkmaar	19	6	5	8	28	35	23
12. Groningen	19	6	4	9	25	32	22

QANTAS
THE SPIRIT OF AUSTRALIA

National Soccer League	TOTAL							HOME						AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS	P	W	D	L	F	A	P	W	D	L	F	A
SOUTH MELBOURNE	17	11	5	1	33	10	38	9	7	2	0	21	5	8	4	3	1	12	5
SYDNEY OLYMPIC	17	10	3	4	27	15	33	8	6	1	1	16	6	9	4	2	3	11	9
PERTH GLORY	17	9	5	3	37	17	32	9	6	2	1	24	6	8	3	3	2	13	11
MARCONI STALLIONS	17	9	5	3	27	16	32	9	5	2	2	16	11	8	4	3	1	11	5
WOLLONGONG WOLVES	15	9	4	2	31	17	31	8	5	2	1	16	8	7	4	2	1	15	8
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS	17	8	3	6	32	27	27	8	4	2	2	14	11	9	4	1	4	18	16
SYDNEY UNITED	17	7	5	5	24	26	26	8	4	3	1	12	11	9	3	2	4	12	15
PARRAMATTA POWER	17	8	1	8	27	24	25	9	4	0	5	16	16	8	4	1	3	11	8
ADELAIDE CITY FORCE	16	7	2	7	25	28	23	8	5	1	2	18	13	8	2	1	5	7	15
FOOTBALL KINGZ	17	6	4	7	25	27	22	8	4	2	2	14	7	9	2	2	5	11	20
CANBERRA COSMOS	17	6	3	8	28	28	21	7	2	1	4	11	11	10	4	2	4	17	17
NORTHERN SPIRIT	16	5	4	7	19	19	19	9	3	3	3	9	8	7	2	1	4	10	11
BRISBANE STRIKERS	17	4	5	8	26	31	17	7	3	3	1	15	8	10	1	2	7	11	23
NEWCASTLE UNITED	17	3	7	7	14	28	16	10	3	2	5	9	15	7	0	5	2	5	13
EASTERN PRIDE	17	2	4	11	19	30	10	9	1	4	3	9	14	8	1	0	7	10	16

Matches played against Carlton will result in all teams being awarded a 3-0 win and 3 competition points

PARRAMATTA POWER 1
(Bagojevic 86)
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 3
(Cervinski 2, 68, 87)

Venue: Parramatta Stadium. **Crowd:** 2,475. **Referee:** C Diomis
Cautions: Brown (PP) 11, Thorp (PP) 18, Bennett (PP) 26, Porter (MK) 28, Taliadors (PP) 87.
Teams: POWER: Pogliacomi, Elrich, Tobin (Clark 58), Miller, Berry (Griffiths 46), Brown, Blagojevic, Thorp (Taliadoras 73), Vrkic, Bennett, Lee.
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS: Acevski, Vasilevski (Kovacevic 90), R.Vargas, Ognenovski, Porter (Vukadin 88), Kiratzoglou, A.Vargas, Da Costa, Horvat, Cervinski, (Pelikan 90), Lapsansky.

BRISBANE STRIKERS 0
NEWCASTLE UNITED 0

Venue: Ballymore. **Crowd:** 1,000. **Referee:** P Green.
Cautions: Dwyer (BS) 25, Harper (NU) 61m.
Red Cards: Dwyer 58
Teams: BRISBANE STRIKERS: Duke, Stefanutto, Grierson, Srhoj, North, Davidson, Harris, Meredith (Dwyer 20), Drake, Rech (Hews 56), Buljan (Smeltz 73).
NEWCASTLE UNITED: Catlin, Roberts, McManus (McBreen 62), Sprod, Dodd, Wilson, Magnacca, Buonavoglia, Tsekenis, Masi (Juchniewicz 45), Harper (Surjan 87).

LEADING GOALSCORERS
After Round Seventeen

D. MORI	(Perth Glory)	11
A. THOMPSON	(Marconi/Carlton)	10
B. BURGESS	(Northern Spirit)	9
J. MILLER	(Parramatta Power)	9
B. DESPOTOVSKI	(Perth Glory)	8
A. CERVINSKI	(Melb Knights)	7
S. CHIPPERFIELD	(W'gong Wolves)	7

CANBERRA COSMOS 1
(Imaya 57)
MARCONI STALLIONS 2
(Brownlie 34, Trajanovski 40)

Venue: Bruce Stadium. **Crowd:** 1,822. **Referee:** M Shields.
Cautions: Farah (MS) 67, Renaud (MS) 87.
Teams: STALLIONS: Aceski, Costanzo, Longo, Kim, Afkos, Care (Gibson 88), Farah, Brownlie (Radulovic 79), Renauud, Bell, Trajanovski.
CANBERRA COSMOS: Konstantinou, Anthopoulos, Purdue, Hagger, Milin (Popovich 46), Angelucci (Imaya 43), Arranz, Cortes (Rakic 79), Hooker, Scott, Miyazawa.

EASTERN PRIDE 1
(Motsiopoulos 72)
FOOTBALL KINGZ 3
(Ibrahim 27, Lines 49, Urlovic 67)

Venue: Mobil Park. **Crowd:** 1,239. **Referee:** P Mur
Cautions: Atkinson (EP) 39.
Teams: EASTERN PRIDE: Jevdjevic, Fak, Kim, Puca, Hutchinson, Sekulovski, Buhagiar (Deak 55), Cassar (Stergiopoulos 70), Wearne, Atkinson, Motsiopoulos.
FOOTBALL KINGZ: Eaddy, Lines, Osman, Urlovic, Bluhm (Perry 59), Ibrahim (Bunce 72), Ngata, Hickey, Cartwright, Douglas, Burton.

PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Melbourne Knights striker ADRIAN CERVINSKI: Bagged a hat-trick against Parramatta.

SYDNEY UNITED 2
(Menapi 28 & 48)
ADELAIDE CITY 1
(Tunbridge 68)

Venue: Sydney United SC. **Crowd:** 2,754. **Referee:** E Lennie.
Cautions: Bilokapic (SU) 72
Teams: SYDNEY UNITED: Tolios, Olic (Bilokapic 67), Burt, Maric, Plesa, Webb, Deur (Younis 74), Arrarte, Pondeljak, Menapi, Arambasic (Picken 80).
ADELAIDE CITY: Cagalj, Lagati, Kovacevic, Bucciarelli (Brain 50), Salapasidis, Veart, Vidmar, Hassell, Tunbridge, Pantelis, Karlovic.

SOUTH MELBOURNE 1
(Boutsianis 56)
PERTH GLORY 1
(Harnwell 57)

Venue: Bob Jane Stadium. **Crowd:** 12,917. **Referee:** B Hugo.
Cautions: Harnwell (PG) 48, Wehrman (PG) 52. **Red card:** none.
Teams: SOUTH MELBOURNE: M. Petkovic, DeAmicis, Durakovic, Clarkson, Panoloulos, Coveny (Lozanovski 62), Trimboli, Boutsianis, Kalogeracos (Vlahos 20), Susa (Colosimo 65), Kisnorbo.
PERTH GLORY: J. Petkovic, Deans (Naven 46), Miller (c), Milicevic, Harnwell, Valle, Junior, Maloney (Faria 67), Mori, Despotovski, Wehrman.

SYDNEY OLYMPIC 2
(McAllister 30, Cardozo 44)
NORTHERN SPIRIT 1
(Mendez 28)

Venue: Belmore SG. **Crowd:** 7,128. **Referee:** G Connolly.
Cautions: Burgess (NS) 5, Foster (NS) 12, Langdon (NS) 54, Halpin (SO) 59. **Red Cards:** Marusic (SO) 62.
Teams: OLYMPIC: Bolton, Wilson, Baillie, Juric, Marusic, Augerinos, Collina, Goutzoulis, Halpin (Carle 90), McAllister (Owens 67), Cardozo.
NORTHERN SPIRIT: Henderson, Sobczyk, Howson, Smith, Thomas, Cranney, Spencer, Foster (Catanzaro 57), Langdon (Cunico 84), Mendez, Burgess (Watkins 44).

ROUND 18

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 9

Northern Spirit . . . . . vs . . . . . Eastern Pride
Newcastle United . . . . . vs . . . . . Marathon Stadium
Adelaide City . . . . . vs . . . . . Sydney Olympic
Brisbane Strikers . . . . . vs . . . . . Parramatta Power

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 10

Perth Glory . . . . . vs . . . . . Sydney United
Marconi Stallions . . . . . vs . . . . . Wollongong Wolves

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 11

Melbourne Knights . . . . . vs . . . . . Canberra Cosmos

South Melbourne — Bye

WOLLONGONG WOLVES
BYE